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DON MARKSTEIN

#135

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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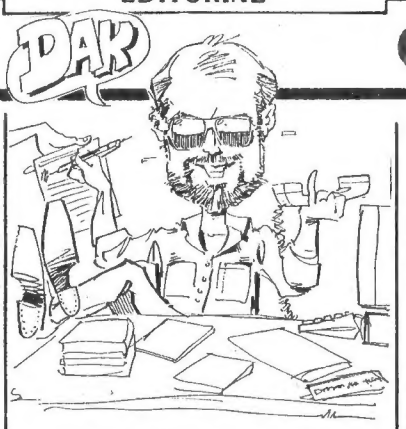

Art: BRIAN STELFREEZE

ZERO TOLERANCE

What if you were a superman?

What if friends and creative folks you'd known for years ossified around you, physically and, far more important, mentally?

What if — like the letter we printed several issues ago about what it would be like for someone such as Quicksilver to wait in line — your mind made elaborate connections and leaped ahead in a rapid chain of cause-and-effect to reach conclusions long before the person speaking to you could stutter out and finish even posing the question?

What if you were able to interrupt the question . . . with a perfect answer, alas so far ahead of the questioner's comprehension as to be entirely beyond him or her?

As I see it, your choices come down to slowing your own intellect to a snail's pace and (in your mind) redundantly explaining step-by-step to lead your listener where you've already instantaneously gone . . . a frustrating, plodding, unsatisfying exercise with no reward for yourself . . .

Or isolating yourself from virtually everyone, even those who once were your peers and mentors, out of frustration and impatience and lack of any meaningful fulfillment in continued relationships with those (the vast majority) who are so "slow."

The former is unfruitful; the latter is nigh unto impossible, as the simple act of attempting to locate a product or produce a project becomes an exercise in dealing with unimaginative and ignorant incompetents until you finally achieve what should have, at the outset, been a simple transaction.

There is, I suppose, at least one other alternative: using your abilities for evil, taking full advantage of the idiots and ignoramuses around you. But let's eliminate this as "not in your nature."

So, in that case, is there any other viable option or alternative that I've overlooked? Or is the ultimate answer and outcome the same as when, in an early Marvel comic, the Leader attained the Globe of Universal Knowledge from The Watcher on the Moon and, donning it, collapsed from sheer sensory overload?

~Dave

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"Everybody knew Superman would die three months

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ZERO HOUR

ZERO MONTH

Once upon a time, glitches in DC continuity were consigned to the mysterious Earth-B. When 1985's CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS eliminated that handy ashcan of discarded story elements, they started to accumulate. That's one point of view. Another is that DC has just been gathering material for this summer's blowout event. So when you see contradictions in the back story, is that a problem in continuity? An indication that you're reading two independent stories that don't necessarily affect each other? Or is it something more . . . sinister? Find out as ZERO HOUR editor KC Carlson and DC executive editor Mike Carlin talk about new beginnings and jump-on points in the DC Universe — all starting with this month's releases . . .

DON MARKSTEIN: *As we speak, Zero Hour has not yet begun. But — as the readers read this, Zero Hour has just finished and we are starting Zero Month. So. I have not read ZERO HOUR, but you know exactly what's going to be in it and so do the readers at this point. So that puts me at an interesting disadvantage. This thing is going to reset the clock. Is that correct?*

KC CARLSON: This is about Zero Month, then, more than anything?

DON: *Yes. This is about Zero Month. So as we speak, the readers know how Zero Hour ends — but I don't.*

MIKE CARLIN: Good. Well, neither do we. *(Laughter.)* So, that should be interesting.

DON: *You don't know? Oh, Are you pushing deadlines also?* (Laughter.)

MIKE: No, actually, we're in good shape on Zero Hour, thanks to KC.

KC: Yeah, we're doing okay. But nobody knows the real ending of ZERO HOUR.

MIKE: No, the thing is, we know that clearly, there are comics the month after it, but you don't know what's going to be in those comics, or what's going to be different because of Zero Hour. And *half* of the fun around the DC Universe these days is not so much where you end, but how you get there.

DON: *Well, sure.*

MIKE: It *is* the roller-coaster ride.

DON: *Looking at the end of a story is not as much fun as reading the story.*

MIKE: Well, everybody knew Superman was going to die three months before he did, but it didn't diminish the fun of reading and hunting down those stories.

DON: *Yeah.*

before he did, but it didn't diminish the fun."

From GREEN LANTERN #0 — pencils by Darryl Banks.

"Part of the idea is not to be slaves to continuity. Obvi-

MIKE: It sounds like you believe that.
DON: (Laughter.) *Well, it's like this. I, uh, acknowledge different points of view.*
MIKE: *(Laughter.)* This is going to be a good interview.
DON: *Good!*
MIKE: Who's got the different point of view? Me or you?
DON: *We have different points of view from each other, I guess. I don't know. But anyway* — (Laughter.)
MIKE: Oh, man. I thought this was an interview, not a review.
DON: *It's not a review. I was trying to get back to Zero Month.*
MIKE: Okay, you ask the questions.
DON: *I'm basically hoping to get you guys chatting, because that's when it's best.*
MIKE: Well, we never talk to each other.
DON: *Oh, really?* (Laughter.) *No, I believe it. I'm really gullible.*
MIKE: So far! *(Laughter.)*

I *was* trying to talk. And a lot of it was trying to give a reference point. I mean, we're not going to tell you what happens in Zero Hour, even though this comes out afterwards. We're just not comfortable with the information being out.

DON: *Okay.*
MIKE: No offense.
DON: *I can't think of anything I'd really want to do with the information anyway.*
MIKE: That's what they all say. *(Laughter.)* We've had our run-ins with reputable reporters just making a mistake. Not anything malicious. At the same time, what you do want to hear about are the hopefully very clear jump-on points across the rest of the DC Universe line, which is what Zero Month is all about. Zero Hour being a crossover, is something that people have seen before, in terms of the format. We've seen all the heroes get together before, we've seen them fight and triumph over something very cosmic. At the same time, what's different in this case is what we're left with at the end of it. Since Zero Hour involves time travel and interstices of continuity which we'd be the first people to say have been a little messed up —

DON: *Well now, I could take the point of view that, is it necessarily a bad thing that continuity's messed up?*
MIKE: All right. As long as that's written next to *your* name in this.
DON: *Well, of course.* (Laughter.)
MIKE: Because I think that if anything is messed up, that's not a good thing. And I'll tell you why. First of all, the readers are confused. And confusion is not good. Mysteries are good, gaps in storylines that are there for creative reasons are a

ously, we're interested in telling big, exciting stories."

good thing, but confusion is not a good thing. If the writers, artists and editors are confused as well, and they don't know how the stuff goes together, then messed-up continuity is the worst thing a comic-book line can have — especially after 50 years.

DON: *After 50 years, it would seem almost inevitable.*

MIKE: And that's why periodically, we get a CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS, we get a CRISIS IN TIME, and you know, ten or fifteen years from now somebody else should be messing around with what we did.

KC: Right. I mean, part of the idea is not to be slaves to continuity, either. Obviously, we're more interested in telling big stories, big, exciting stories. And that's the biggest goal for ZERO HOUR.

MIKE: That is our priority.

KC: On the other hand, we need to have a consistent universe, and we need to eliminate some of the lapses in logic that have cropped up along the way.

MIKE: Again, but the idea of being a slave to continuity is what we shouldn't be. We should be moving forward, and what ZERO HOUR lets us do is move forward *cleanly.* Every reader, every writer, every editor will be starting the Zero Month books with the exact same information. It will be something that will *hopefully* keep things *only* moving forward and not looking backward — for a little while.

DON: *I have read about the grand chart that's going to be in ZERO HOUR #0. Or shall I say, will have been in ZERO HOUR #0.*

MIKE: Right. We call it a Time Line.

DON: *So, this is going to be just a reference point that anybody can use?*

MIKE: Yep.

KC: Exactly.

DON: *What a collector's item!*

KC: Well, we think so.

MIKE: It's free! *(Laughter.)* It's free with the book!

KC: Yeah, I mean, ZERO HOUR #0 is going to be the best bargain in comics this summer, because we've got a 28-page story, plus this six-page fold-out.

DON: *That's a* six-page *fold-out?*

KC: Yeah, at the regular price of the book.

DON: *Now, as a, uh — I started reading DC comics in the '50s, so anything you do is going to aggravate me, right?*

MIKE: Apparently! *(Laughter.)*

DON: (Laughter.) *Now, that's okay —*

MIKE: Yeah!

DON: *— because I remember a Mort Weisinger letter column in the early '60s or so —*

MIKE: That's not on the Time Line, by the way. *(Laughter.)*

DON: *Mort Weisinger's —*

MIKE: No, that letter column is —

DON: *— gone?*

MIKE: We cut it out of the continuity.

DON: (Laughter.) *No! No!*

The gist of it — before you wrote it out of continuity — was that Superman has met this Lori Lemaris character, who has a fish tail because she comes from Atlantis; but he's also met Aquaman, who comes from Atlantis and — are you familiar with the letter or the reply?

MIKE: No.

DON: *Well, that's the gist of the letter. Now, the reply is, these are just lines on paper — or words to that effect. And it seems to me that that was always DC's strong point — until they decided to do continuity.*

MIKE: It seems to me that right around that time is when DC's strong point became their weak point, and Marvel kicked their ass — in the '60s, when people who took their comic books a little more seriously switched camps. And

Here: GREEN ARROW #0 cover by Burchett. Previous page: Anthony Williams & Andrew Lanning's FATE #0 artwork.

BACK ISSUES

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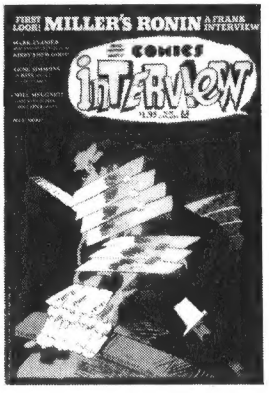

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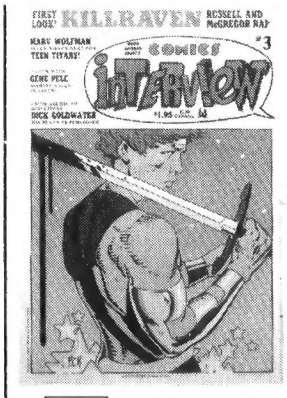

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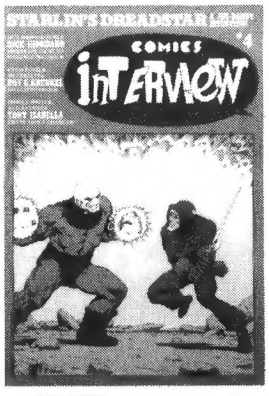

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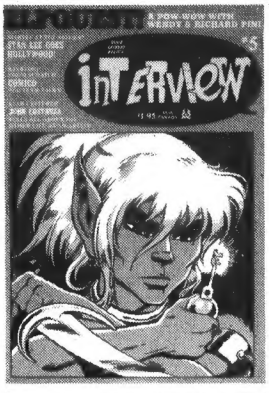

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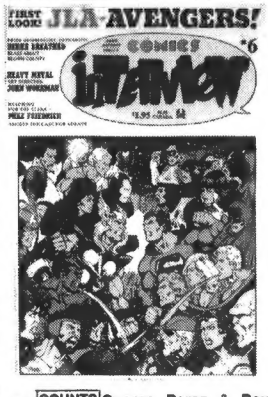

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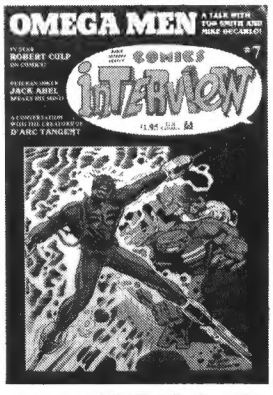

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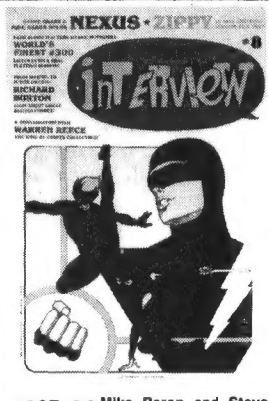

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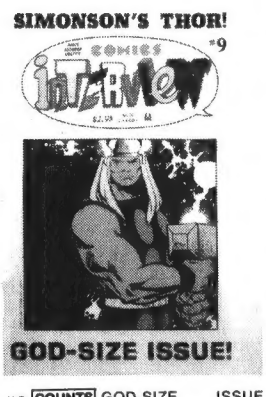

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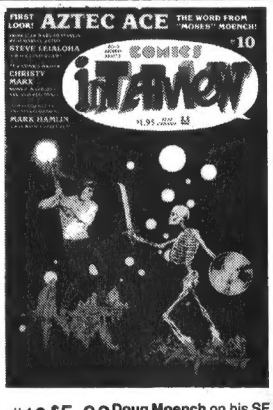

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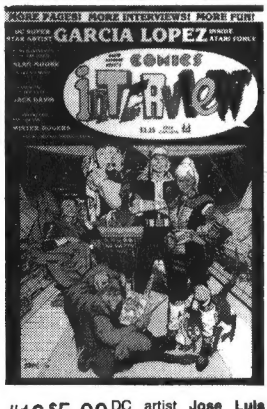

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"I still have my Mort Weisinger SUPERMANs in my closet."

Marvel has *been* on top since then. And I think that whether you agree with whether or not DC was good or bad at that time — I mean, I was a DC fan when I was a kid; I never bought Marvel Comics; I always loved them, but you cannot deny the history of the comics business — that Marvel filled a gap that needed to be filled.

DON: *There were a million reasons for that, too.*

MIKE: I know there were. But I do think that some of the DC comics which were a little more trite and trivial at the time were not holding the readers — whether we like that or not. I mean, I like them — I like the goofy stuff, but I think we liked it for the wrong reasons.

DON: *What I was getting at is, no matter what you do with continuity, I've still got my Hal Jordan.*

MIKE: Oh yeah, well —

DON: *You can't take that away.*

MIKE: That's our point too. It's like no matter what we do in terms of trying to come up with an interesting story, in the case of Hal Jordan — I'll argue to the death that we should have the *right* to tell a story that has a sad ending instead of a happy ending. Or a failure instead of a victory. We have that right as creative writers. Okay? And if you don't like it, you still have all your Hal Jordans in your closet, I still have all my **Mort Weisinger** SUPERMANs in my closet, and I can enjoy them any time I want. If I feel in a Porcupine Boy mood, I got my JIMMY OLSEN comics there. But I also — as a creative person, I'm not interested in just directly rehashing something that's been done already. I *want* to move forward and I think the readers, today, don't want to read the comics that their fathers read, or that their grandfathers read. They want to read comics that are their own.

DON: *Who said that the Justice Society is going to have its last adventure, and now they're going to retire as superheroes, etc. etc., and we keep making them younger and younger, but it's time to let go?* (Laughter.) *I thought that was well put.*

KC: That might have been Dan, I guess.

MIKE: Yes, might have been **Jurgens.**

DON: *Now, what are the plans for the various members of the Justice Society? Some live, some die, right?*

KC: Right.

MIKE: Well, they don't have a zero issue, so that may give you some clue. *(Laughter.)*

DON: *But there is basically no more Justice Society?*

MIKE: They disband and go their separate ways. Some willingly, some, it's decided for them.

DON: *Uh huh. Are some of them still kicking around, as old guys who used to be superheroes?*

KC: Sure.

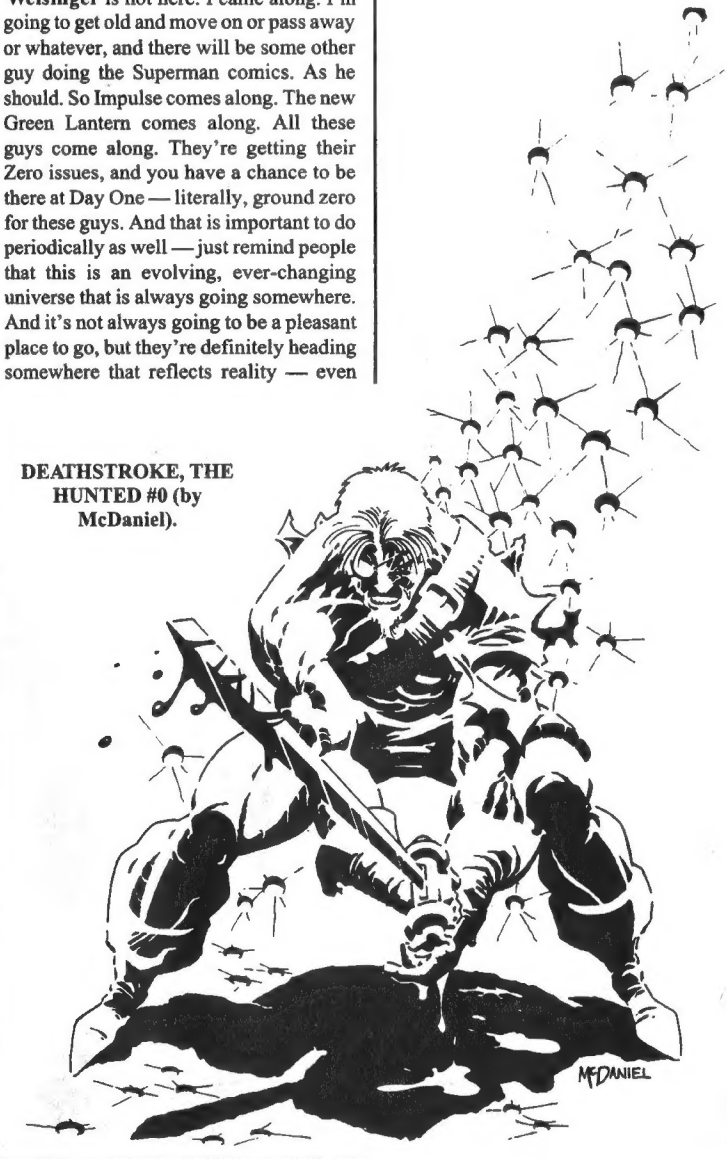
MIKE: Yes. Ultimately — I mean, we are talking about people who fly around with capes on their backs. But at the same time, it's our interest to make the world that those people are in as realistic as possible, and sometimes realism sucks. You know, people die. People get old. I think after 56 years, it's not a bad thing to reflect that.

DON: *Really!*

MIKE: Yes. *(Laughter.)* And at the same time, new guys come along. **Mort Weisinger** is not here. I came along. I'm going to get old and move on or pass away or whatever, and there will be some other guy doing the Superman comics. As he should. So Impulse comes along. The new Green Lantern comes along. All these guys come along. They're getting their Zero issues, and you have a chance to be there at Day One — literally, ground zero for these guys. And that is important to do periodically as well — just remind people that this is an evolving, ever-changing universe that is always going somewhere. And it's not always going to be a pleasant place to go, but they're definitely heading somewhere that reflects reality — even though it's guys who shoot ray blasts from their hands. *(Laughter.)*

DON: *Now, this one's for KC. What about the Legion of Superheroes? The 30th Century dissolves in what, ZERO HOUR #1? And so does the rest of the Time Line as we know it.*

KC: Uh, not technically correct. The 30th Century is actually being protected by someone, temporarily, throughout the five-issue ZERO HOUR mini-series. So there is this little pocket of time that is being protected from the time storms and everything else that's happening in the rest of the cosmos. The Legion does make it through until close to the end of the series, and then something happens.



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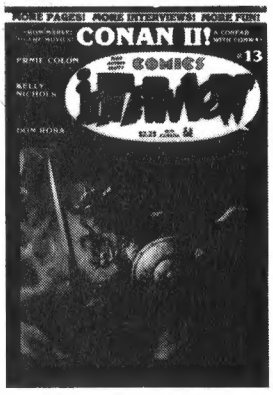

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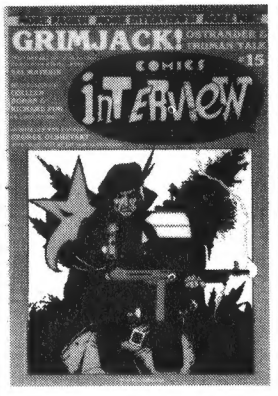

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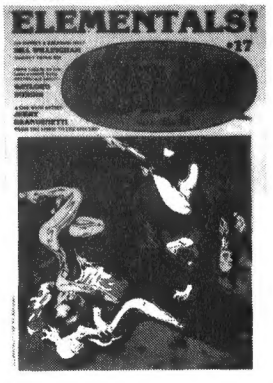
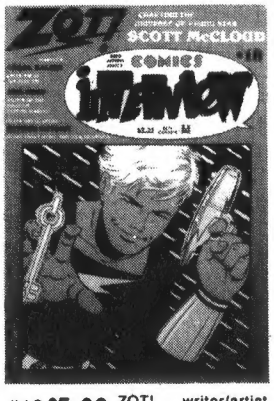


#17 COUNTS AS FIVE THE ELEMENTALS! Creator **Bill Willingham** talks about this super-group! **Jerry Grandenetti** his years with **Will Eisner!** — Golden Age great **Gaylord DuBois.** Cover by **Bill Willingham**



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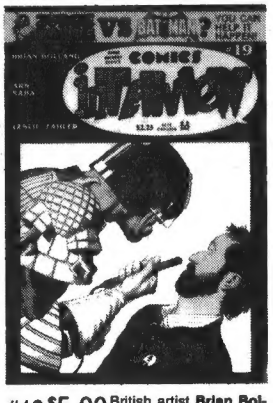

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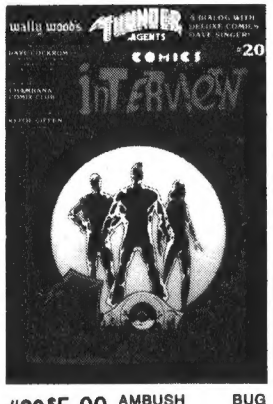

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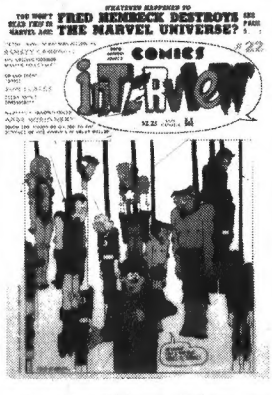

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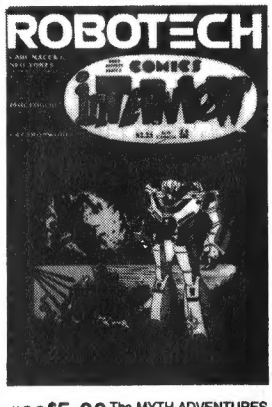

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"You're going to see a *lot* you didn't first time around."

DON: *And all of a sudden — their whole back story is changed.*
KC: No, not necessarily.
MIKE: You may get to see it fresh.
KC: Yeah, you get to see it from the starting point, basically.
MIKE: You get to see it unfold. And a lot of what's happened in the comics business over the years — and this is going to happen in the Superman Zero books — is you know Superman's origin —
DON: *Right.*
MIKE: — you know Batman's origin —
DON: *Since I was a child, yes.*
MIKE: — there may be some facts that we haven't showed you yet. There may be something that happens down the street at the same time that will affect the heroes later on. And that's how you're going to see the Legion. You're going to see some stuff that you didn't catch the last time around, because the comics were simpler back then. They didn't have the room; they didn't have the space. They didn't have the *need* to show you this other stuff.
DON: *Are we going to see some stuff that wasn't* there *the first time around, or something that* contradicts *what we saw the first time around?*
KC: You're going to see a *lot* of stuff you didn't see the first time around. I mean, you can refer to it, I guess, as a contradiction, but —
MIKE: Here's what Zero Hour is all about. Zero Hour says that if there's a contradiction before or after this story — the bad guy did it. So it really was there, but now it's different, because the bad guy was doing it. Okay? So that's where contradictions now fall. Contradictions are now a story point.
KC: And that's the perfect way to explain what's happening in LEGION.
DON: *So if we do see a contradiction with a familiar story, then the current one prevails, of course. But there might be contradictions.*
MIKE: Only in your terminology. In our terminology, what you think was a contradiction before really happened, but time has been realigned in ZERO HOUR so the contradiction has faded away.
KC: What you're going to find out in the midst of ZERO HOUR in terms of the Legion is that a number of the things that you would point out as contradictions actually will now make sense because of the situation ZERO HOUR creates. It's actually a story point.
DON: *Possibly I should use the term "apparent contradictions."*
KC: Okay.
MIKE: Like you said from the start, you may take the contrary point of view as a

Three ZERO MONTH covers gracing DC's "Bat" books . . .

. . . (top to bottom: BATMAN: LEGEND OF THE DARK KNIGHT (Quesada & Palmiotti), BATMAN (by Manley), DETECTIVE COMICS (Nolan & Hanna).

"ZERO HOUR is when the old continuity is inte-

person and *always* say it's just a contradiction. But I say the contradictions were there anyway, so by making them a catalyst for our big story this summer and something that hopefully sets up a *clarified* universe where the contradictions will be less for the time being — I guarantee you that in 15 years there's going to be some other contradictions.

DON: *Oh, no doubt.*

MIKE: But we're going to do our best to make sure that *doesn't* happen — which is the big difference between this time and the last time around.

KC: The other thing about ZERO HOUR is what it isn't — is it isn't something that will go in and explain why Element Lad had a pink costume in one issue and a purple costume in another. We're not going to get that nit-picky about stuff like that, but we're going to provide an opportunity for the fans to make the connection, intellectually, about why that happened, and all that.

DON: *Right. So this explains the old Weisinger boo-boos.*

KC: In a sense, yeah.

MIKE: But then, if you remember a story that you think was a mistake or a contradiction — or you just didn't like the story — you, as a *reader*, can decide whether it still fits or not.

DON: *Now, I like that! Yeah!*

MIKE: Yeah, that's the way we always did it before fandom got organized anyway. You figured it in — or you figured it out. And basically, we *are* going to give you, by buying every issue of the LEGION that comes out from now on, you will know what is considered real specifically. You can extrapolate other stuff if you want to.

DON: *So the stuff before really happened, if you say it happened.*

KC: Yeah.

MIKE: And the bad guy was involved. *(Laughter.)* I mean, the Legion has been totally based on having time-travel villains for years. The villains have been screwing around with the Legion's continuity anyway, for years — *on camera!* Now, with ZERO HOUR, you see how much of a mistake that turns out to be for the whole universe, *and* you also get to see how from now on, it's going to be clearer — as far as the Legion is concerned.

KC: A lot clearer. We're not *denying* anything that happened. But there's no reason to bring it up anymore, because we're setting up a whole new reality.

MIKE: What we're saying is that it happened. Okay? ZERO HOUR then happened. And now a different thing happened. That's all.

KC: *Uh huh.*

MIKE: ZERO HOUR is the month when the old continuity is integrated into the new, basically, by the villain being defeated.

DON: *So you're not going to tell me, basically, any more about what's going to be happening in ZERO MONTH. Is that correct?*

MIKE: In ZERO HOUR, we won't. Zero Month —

KC: Zero Month, we can talk to you about.

MIKE: Frankly, I would like to talk about some of the new things that we have coming out, not just stuff from the '60s.

DON: *Excellent! Let's hear about them. In fact, let's hear about them at great length.*

MIKE: We'll hear about them at medium length. Coming out of ZERO HOUR, we are launching, during Zero Month, several new titles. — new *versions* of old, familiar names. Guys like Starman, Fate — whom you may remember as Doctor Fate — Primal Force and Manhunter are the main spin-offs based on the old names. Primal Force, not so much an old

grated into the new by the villain being defeated."

name, but a lot of old characters, and some new ones. L.E.G.I.O.N. '94 is evolved into something called R.E.B.E.L.S. '94, and their whole mandate is now different. They're not so much policemen for the universe anymore; they're kinda like, uh, cosmic terrorists.

DON: *Well, terrorism is in your point of view, right?*

MIKE: You're a good interviewer! *(Laughter.)*

DON: *Am I?* (Laughter.)

MIKE: STARMAN does directly tie to the stuff from the old days. You don't have to have read it, though, to understand the new Starman and his problems with being the Starman. That's edited by **Archie Goodwin,** and it promises to be a lot more offbeat a superhero book than you might consider Superman or Batman.

DON: *Oh, really?*

MIKE: Yeah.

DON: *So what we have is a reluctant superhero?*

MIKE: I guess you could say that. Well, actually, there's two Starmen in the Zero issue, and one of them is not reluctant. But, he doesn't make it past page two.

DON: *Aww. Too bad.*

MIKE: Yeah, that's the sad ending on page two. *(Laughter.)* But then the good

Some of DC Comics' flagship heroes' ZERO MONTH covers (here/right going clockwise): WONDER WOMAN by Bolland, HAWKMAN by Lee Weeks, ACTION COMICS by Guice, FLASH by Wieringo & Marzan, SPECTRE by Mandrake, and JUSTICE LEAGUE AMERICA by Wojtkiewicz & Dvorak.

"If you want to get into the nitpicking angle, a lot of these

news is that there's another Starman around.

KC: There are definite ties to the DC Universe with these titles. The characters we're talking about are the sons of the original Starman, Ted Knight.

DON: *Now, the sons of Ted Knight — Ted Knight would be a little older than my father, who recently died at 74. Now, he —*

MIKE: How much time did he spend in Valhalla?

DON: *He did not spend any —*

MIKE: He wasn't rejuvenated, then.

DON: *Gotcha. But it's not the Ted Knight thing I have the problem with — well, not the* problem, *but that I have the questions about. It's that the sons would be older than me. That puts them in their 50s.*

MIKE: Not all of them.

DON: *Oh, a randy old guy, was he?*

MIKE: Yeah.

DON: *All right!*

MIKE: Hey! You ever hear of Charlie Chaplin? *(Laughter.)*

DON: *Okay, so these are fairly young sons.*

MIKE: These guys are superheroes, man!

KC: If you want to get into the nitpicking angle of this stuff, a lot of these guys put aside their lives for their superheroic careers, throughout the war and stuff like that, and they only started living personal lives after they disbanded the Justice Society —

MIKE: And when the younger heroes came along —

KC: So most of these guys put aside their lives to serve their country, more or less. So you have to extrapolate from that, what we *didn't* see, behind the scenes, is they were having families.

MIKE: So there you go.

DON: *Okay. So, these guys were being born when Starman was having his late-'60s, early '70s appearances in —*

MIKE: If you say so.

DON: *Oh, I see — if I say so.*

MIKE: You can fit it wherever you like.

DON: *I see. All right, all right.*

MIKE: When you see how old the character is, you can figure out how many

Two STARMAN covers by Tony Harris, both later to become paintings — both the Zero Hour and Zero Month.

guys put aside their lives for their superheroic careers."

years ago he happened. And you can make up the date when he went on with his wife, and —

DON: *Yeah, I'm thinking of these guys in terms of normal aging patterns and stuff,* (Laughter.) *and normal family lives.*

MIKE: There is a danger with thinking anything normal about comic-book time. That is a dangerous place to play in.

DON: *This is true. How long has it been since Superman arrived on Earth?*

MIKE: I'd say, seven years?

KC: Uh, ten years.

DON: *Ten years.*

KC: Wait, since he arrived on Earth? No, it's been 33 years.

MIKE: 33 years.

DON: *Gotcha. Right, right. Since Superman put on his costume, or arrived in Metropolis, let's say.*

MIKE: That's a shorter time.

KC: Yes, his first public appearance was ten years ago.

MIKE: And that's all in the Time Line.

DON: *Excellent.*

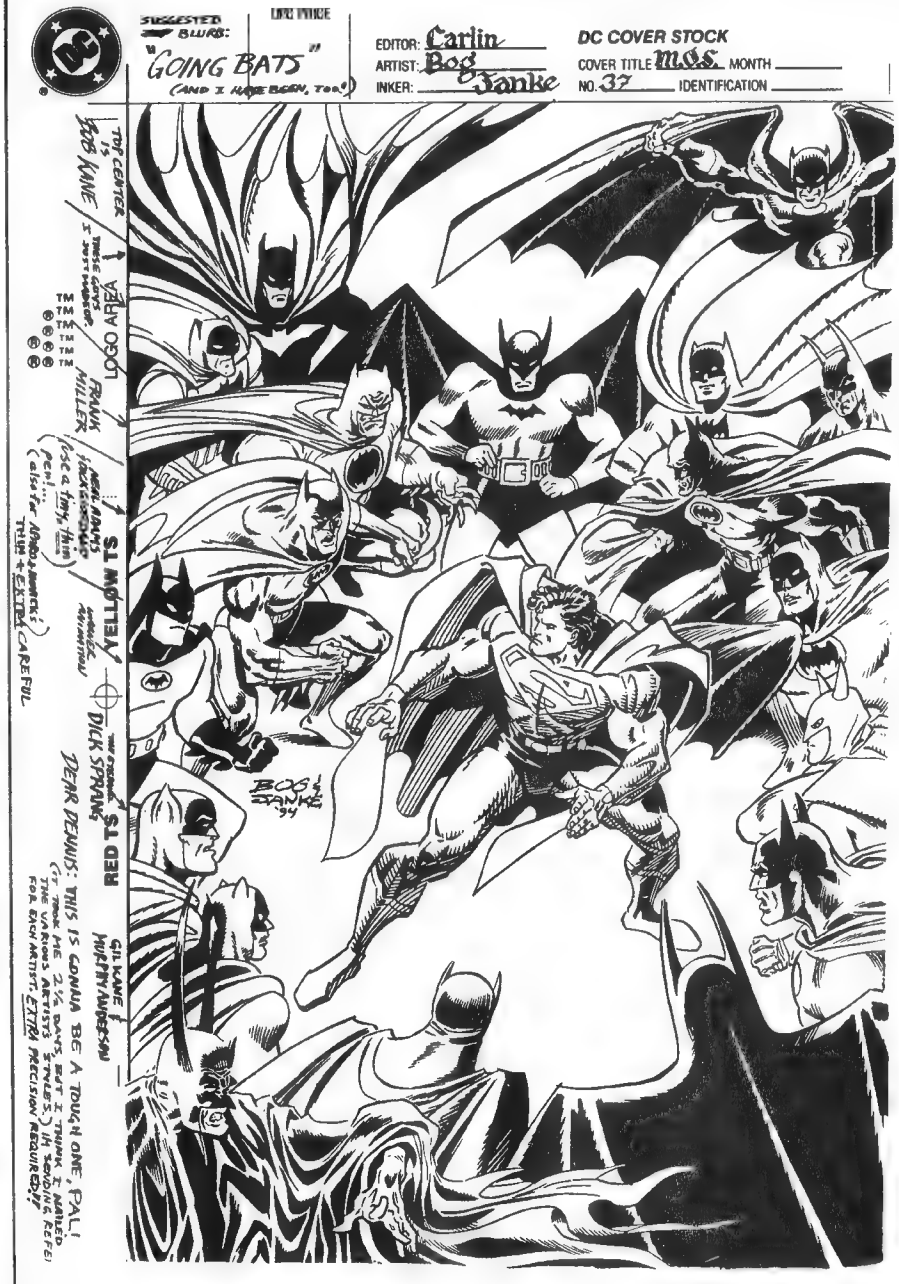
MIKE: But the night Ted Knight conceived his son is *not* in the Time Line. *(Laughter.)*

DON: *It's not in the Time Line — we just have to —*

MIKE: You can figure it out when you see how old the guy is.

DON: *Sounds like a winner to me. Okay. Now, who else?*

MIKE: Well, Manhunter is actually a totally *new* character that uses the name of some old, familiar characters. That's also edited by **Archie Goodwin**, who was the creator of the original Manhunter for



An interesting MAN OF STEEL cover (#37) by Bogdanove & Janke. Question is, can you identify all the various styles and periods? We have: Bob Kane, Neal Adams (with Dick Giordano), Frank Miller, Walt Simonson, Gil Kane (with Murphy Anderson), Carmine Infantino (also with Anderson), Mike Golden, Kelley Jones, Marshall Rogers, Dick Sprang, Irv Novick, et al. (No fair looking at the artist/editor notes — though that will only help you a little.) By the way,don't forget about the animated series and the old serials (before television, folks!).

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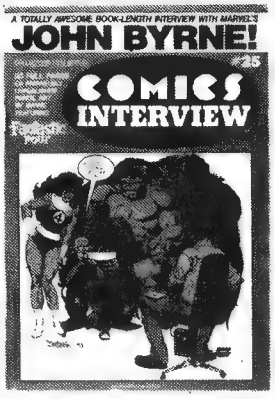

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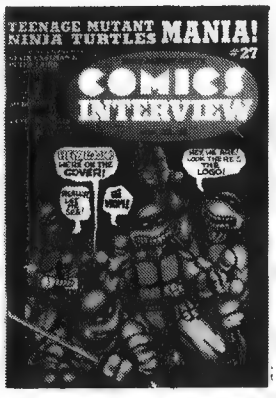

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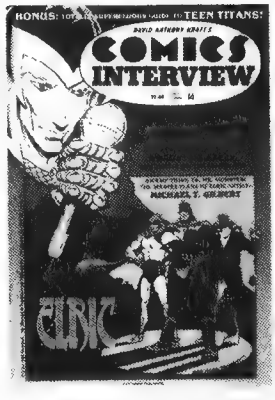

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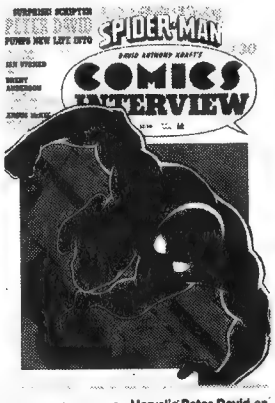

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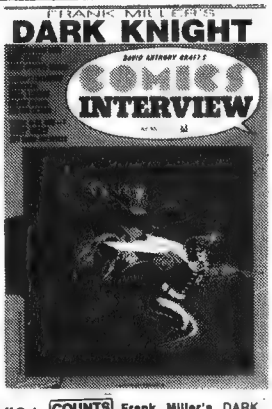

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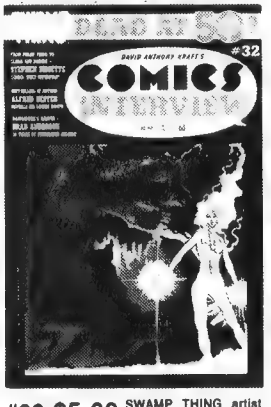

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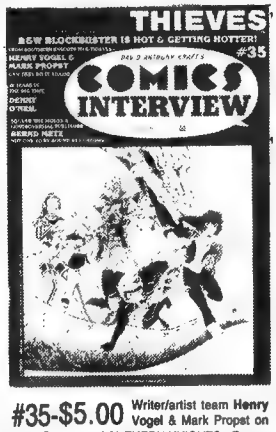

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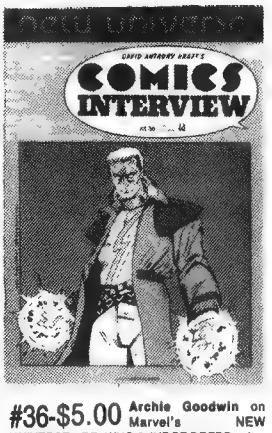

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"There were two Manhunters in the Golden Age."

DC.

DON: *Well, not quite the original.*

MIKE: You're right. The **Walt Simonson** one. And it *is* a name with tradition around here. And this new character is a totally new take on what a Manhunter could be. It's actually pretty cool.

DON: *You know, DC even inherited a character called Manhunter from Quality Comics.*

MIKE: Oh, really? That's good to know.

DON: *Yeah.*

KC: Yeah, there were actually two Manhunters running around in the Golden Age. That was all explained away in MILLENNIUM.

DON: *Oh, really?*

KC: Yep.

DON: *Tsk tsk.*

MIKE: That was the last time the Manhunters came around, right?

KC: Yeah.

DON: *So this new Manhunter has absolutely no connection whatsoever to interstellar organizations, or hordes of androids, or people from Mars?*

KC: He's down to earth.

MIKE: Yeah, he's pretty primal.

DON: *Oh, really? So, he's a manhunter in the sense of "The Most Dangerous Game"? Is that it?*

MIKE: Well, some of this you're going to have to wait and see. And Fate is also directly connected to the recent Dr. Fate, with the helmet and the magical powers and whatever. And the helmet is involved, except that the new Fate does not wear a helmet. He manifests the power through different uses of the metal that the helmet was made of.

DON: *It's already been printed that he melts the helmet down to make a knife.*

MIKE: Then you can put it in your interview. *(Laughter.)*

DON: *I'm not gonna get anything, am I?*

MIKE: The basic things that we can tell you about Zero Month — *never* would I tell *anybody* a big surprise in a story. No matter whether it was the day before the book comes out or six months before. What I *will* tell you is the gist of the Zero Month books, the whole concept of doing a jump-on point. A lot of companies do jump-on points. DC has 50 years to cover on some of the characters. Some of the characters have 50 *pages* to recap. Impulse is out there now, and he's a very new character, and he's going to play an important part in the Flash's continuity from now on, for the time being anyway. And you're still going to get, in the Zero issues of all our comics, the essential, iconic images and elements that you need to understand any DC title for the years to come. You will see Superman's rocket ship land. If you don't know the origin of Superman, you get it replayed for you. If you do know the origin, you get it replayed with a few elements that you didn't know about before. Same thing with Batman. Same thing with some of the

MANHUNTER covers by series artist Vince Giarrano.

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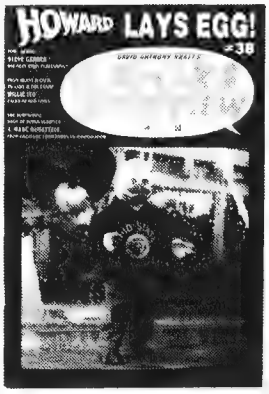
#37-$5.00 G.I. JOE SPECIAL! Writer/editor **Larry Hama**, TV writers **Steve Gerber & Buzz Dixon** on the comics, syndicated TV shows, and the JOE movie—**Rubinstein**, part 2—G.I. JOE cover!



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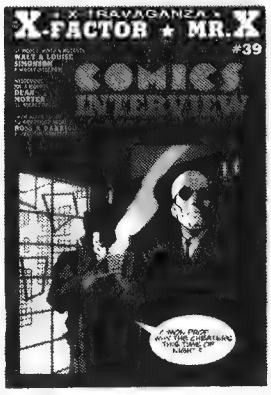

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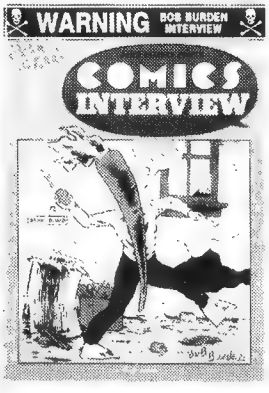

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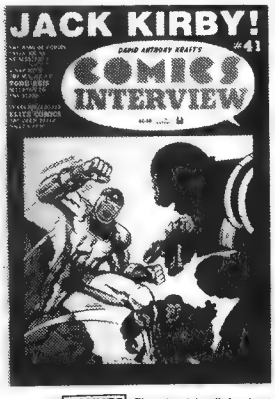

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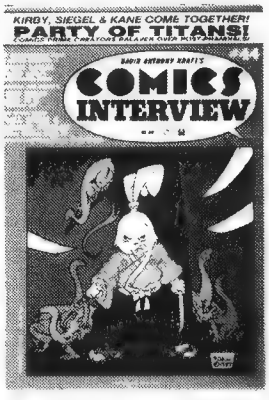

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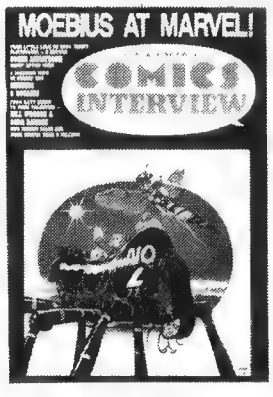

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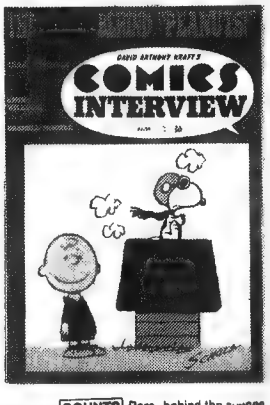

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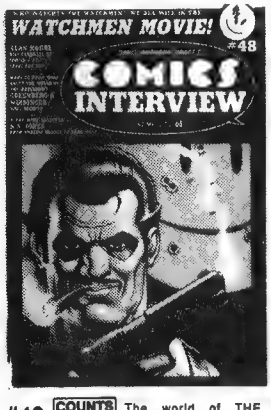

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"I don't expect every reader to enjoy every facet of DC."

newer characters, with the new Green Lantern. You will be given all of the essential information you need, in *one month*, to understand the DC Universe. That's a pretty big event. Nothing like that's been done before. Some smaller companies have done jump-on point type things, if you're talking about five or six titles, ten titles, it's still not as sweeping a laying of groundwork. This is building on the old and introducing the new.

And that — that's the stuff that ZERO HOUR is about. It's not about the specifics. The specifics of each title are going to either interest a reader or not. We have a lot of variety. I don't expect every reader to enjoy every single facet of the DC Universe. But there's plenty of whatever they like. And that's your month to try a few things that you're not so sure about. And you can make up your mind. Ultimately, all I ever ask anybody to do on any comic I work on is just try it. Don't judge it by its cover. You can be influenced by the cover, but don't judge it by what you've heard people say about it; don't judge a Superman comic because you saw a crummy cartoon 30 years ago. Judge it on what it is. Try one — and this is the month to try them.

DON: *I don't mind telling you that I'm going to take advantage of that myself.* (Laughter.)

MIKE: Good. That's good.

DON: *There are a few things I lost track of years ago.*

MIKE: And if you don't like something, that's cool, but at least you tried. it. That's the only thing I ask of anybody.

DON: *It is so hard — it's so hard for a new reader to try it. You miss the first issue, that's it — and the first issue is just*

Panel from the #0 issue of GREEN LANTERN by Banks & inker Romeo Tanghal.

"I *do* believe that's the key here, is not to

out of sight.

MIKE: That's true. That's true. Well, you're not going to get the first issue of SUPERMAN very easily.

DON: *No.* (Laughter.)

MIKE: So now, you can get the Zero issue *very* easily.

DON: *Aha!*

MIKE: The Zero issue of ACTION COMICS — I mean, it's up to issue #703 the month before Zero.

KC: Right.

MIKE: This is a historic occasion.

DON: *After Zero, do you continue with #704, or skip to #705 or —*

MIKE: Yes, we go back to the regular numbering.

DON: *The last question was, do you start over with #1?*

MIKE: No, we go back to the regular numbering on the established series. There are some of the new series clearly are starting with Zero and going into #1.

DON: *So this is not, Zero replaces an issue.*

MIKE: Yes, Zero is just our October cover date.

KC: Yeah, it's just kind of like a time-out on the regular continuity, basically. And not necessarily a time-out, either, because some of the issues will actually reflect the current things that are happening in the titles, *while* giving you the back story at the same time.

MIKE: Right. And a lot of stuff will be told in flashbacks. But we're going back to issue #704 on ACTION. We're not trying to deny DC's history, by any stretch. We're trying to build on it, so that it has a longer history. We're proud of being at issue #700 of anything.

DON: *As well you should be.*

MIKE: I would *hate* to just wipe that out by renumbering.

KC: Right.

MIKE: That's never been our intent. We're trying to remind people and reiterate what *made* the DC Universe great, *by* moving forward. In the Silver Age, when **Julie Schwartz** came up with the new Green Lanterns and the new Flashes and all that stuff — if there was organized fandom at the time, they *might* have been just as outraged. Because that wasn't *really* Green Lantern, and that wasn't *really* Flash. And now, 30 years later, they're considered the real Flash and the real Green Lantern. A lot of it is just getting used to things, and a lot of it is just being a little open-minded to try something new. And I do think that people *are* accepting some of the newer characters, which is very gratifying. Superboy is doing very well.

DON: *Oh, really?*

MIKE: Yes. Maybe not with you.

DON: *I have no* objection *to comics I don't, uh, pay much attention to.*

MIKE: There you go. That's fair.

KC: Another aspect of ZERO HOUR that really hasn't been brought up much is the fact that the story is really kind of a generational saga in dealing with what happens to heroes as they live their lives, and things like that. We see the torch being passed from hero to hero in this book. You brought up the Justice Society earlier. What you see in ZERO HOUR that happens to the Justice Society is a logical extension of what happens to people as they live their lives, and how things happen. And hopefully, it'll be a more poignant story point than what has been done with them in the past.

DON: *And this is a good time, after fifty-odd years, to be doing that kind of stuff.*

MIKE: Yeah. It's a good time, and it's

Three "super" covers! SUPERMAN: THE MAN OF STEEL (bog/Janke), SUPERBOY (Grummett/Kesel), STEEL (Bog/Batista).

stagnate. Stagnation is deadly, for anything."

also, as we said, from the creative standpoint, it was *necessary* to do, just so that things would keep moving forward. I know I've said that a couple of times. I *do* believe that's the key thing here, is not to stagnate. Stagnation is deadly, for anything — especially a living and thriving universe.

DON: *Now, you have established, in recent months, that the Spectre is more than just something that grew out of Jim Corrigan.*

MIKE: Yeah, his Zero issue should be interesting.

DON: *I should think. So, we're going to hear some stuff about the Spectre that this 50-odd-year-old character, in, you know, real-world times, has never revealed before? We're going to learn stuff about this guy?*

MIKE: Yes. If you've read ZERO HOUR already —

DON: *Which the readers have and I haven't.*

MIKE: When this is printed, read this again and you'll know what I'm saying. The Spectre is involved in ZERO HOUR. He plays a very big part — literally. *(Laughter.)* Probably the biggest part in there. Physically.

DON: *What, the hand they saw at —*

MIKE: He takes on his big form. And at the same time, you can pick up SPECTRE #0 and learn a lot of back story on this character. ZERO HOUR is not a book where you're going to learn something about every single character who's standing in the panel. You're going to learn about the DC Universe.

DON: *Zero Month is —*

MIKE: ZERO *HOUR*. In Zero *Month* — that's where you're going to learn about all the characters who helped save the universe in ZERO HOUR. And you learn about each one of them, individually, starring in their own 22-page adventure where they're not having to share the stage with the rest of the universe. And that's where you can expand on what the Spectre is. That's where you do find out how Jim Corrigan fits in with the Spectre.

DON: *Well, that'll be a good story.*

MIKE: There's gonna be some surprises — and we're not looking to aggravate people, though we're not afraid to. *(Laughter.)*

DON: *You can't take away Porcupine Boy. That's right.*

MIKE: That's right. He's there in my closet, and I love him — and we got the Turtle Boy in the Superman books. We may get the Porcupine Boy in there too.

DON: *Hey, all right!*

MIKE: Even Krypto is back. *(Laughter.)*

DON: *What about Hawkman?*

MIKE: I actually don't know a lot of the specifics of the Zero Issue, though Hawkman *is* one of the big continuity glitches that inspired ZERO HOUR — both in us creatively, and he is one of the first *clues* as to things being very *wrong* to the other heroes in the ZERO HOUR story. Hawkman's continuity has been changed so many times —

DON: *Right.*

KC: In the first chapter of ZERO HOUR, issue #4, we see a scene where Hawkman is on a case, and somehow, magically or mystically or whatever, he seems to replicate into, oh, about a dozen different versions of himself. And that's your first clue as to what's going on with that character.

MIKE: And in the Zero issue, you're going to find out basically what Hawkman is now, at the end of ZERO HOUR. And what he is and has been since the Time Line began. Anything else that you remember Hawkman being — it may, actually, be a *part* of the new Hawkman, but it is something that the bad guy had a hand in.

KC: What it is, what it does, is it opens up a bigger *window* on the Hawkman character, in terms of the back story, and where, exactly, this character or characters came from.

DON: *So Hawkman is enlarged by this concept of Hawkman, is that it?*

The Countdown to Zero Hour "poster" by writer/artist Dan Jurgens and inker Jerry Ordway.

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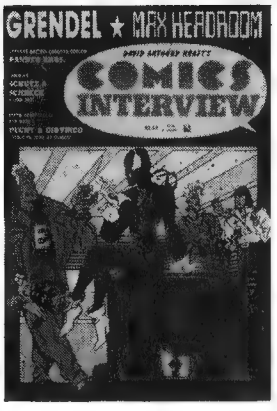

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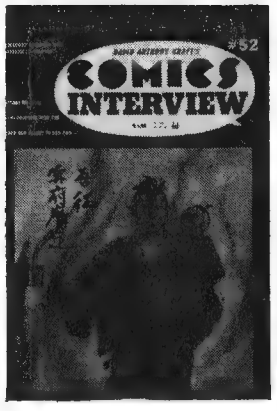

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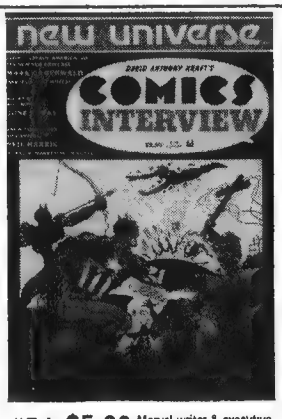

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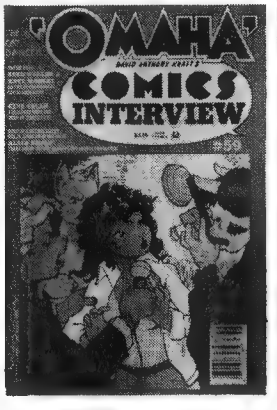

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"We're out to jazz up somebody's day, not *ruin* anybody's day."

MIKE: Yes, yes, that's a good way of putting it.

DON: *I was comparing in my mind the possibilities of Hawkman and the Spectre. Now, the Spectre is* greatly *enlarged by this?*

KC: Right.

MIKE: Yes.

DON: *So Hawkman is — something that's always been around, and — well, we're getting into things you're not going to want to talk about, I guess.*

MIKE: Possibly. Part of the fun of this for any *reader* is also — what could possibly *happen* with the concept of a Hawkman? And part of the fun is *trying* to think of what it's going to be before you get there. If you're doing comics that are just — this is the same as it was last month, this is the same as it was a year ago — the readers aren't wasting their energy trying to help or figure out, They're not spending their time on that. Because they *know* it's just gonna be the same. I think part of the fun is getting *you* thinking about what you think Hawkman could possibly be. And maybe in some cases the reader might set himself up for a disappointment. At the same time, they're at least working with us, and that's what ZERO HOUR is about. Every convention we would go to, readers would tell us what was messed up, what didn't work, how come this happened . . . We sat there feeling the same thing. So it brought us together and we want the readers to be as involved with this as anything.

DON: *But nobody's going to be happy with everything, of course.*

MIKE: No. And we don't fool ourselves into thinking that, either.

DON: *But then, anger is a perfectly good response.*

MIKE: Well, any response is a good response. If people are just not responding at all, then we're really not doing our job. But we're not setting out to anger anybody. When we killed Superman, we didn't want anybody to be mad. I wanted them to be concerned. I wanted them to show that they cared. Because where I sat — I had the feeling that the world had given up on Superman. But they hadn't.

KC: The idea isn't to anger people. The general idea is to make people stop and sit back and think about what they're reading and to look at things from different angles and different points of view.

MIKE: Like any writers of anything, whether it's movie or novel, we're just looking to stimulate. We're looking to entertain. We're looking to jazz up somebody's day. We're not looking to *ruin* anybody's day. *(Laughter.)* Though we do know that that *is* a result sometimes of what we do.

DON: *But at the same time, if a reader is angry, at least he's involved.*

MIKE: That's the way we feel.

KC: Right.

DON: *I don't think we covered all the new series. PRIMAL FORCE —*

MIKE: You want to do that, KC?

KC: PRIMAL FORCE is a new grouping of super characters that somewhat evolves out of ZERO HOUR. Basically, we see some back story regarding kind of historical foes of the group set up in ZERO HOUR. So the clues are a lot more subtle than you might expect. You're going to have to read PRIMAL FORCE in order for a couple pages of ZERO HOUR to make sense to you.

DON: *Oh, really?*

KC: Yeah. But we're talking about mystical presences that have existed for centuries.

MIKE: And they've existed in some characters that you've seen before in the DC Universe, but maybe have not paid a lot of attention to.

DON: *This is what I call "paranoid*

A ZERO HOUR page by Jurgens & Ordway . . . CRISIS IN TIME!

I DON'T KNOW FOR SURE WHAT HUNTER WAS REFERRING TO, BUT--WHAT'S THAT?
AN ANOMALY IN THE TIMESTREAM?
CURIOUS...
EARTH. 68 HOURS, 38 MINUTES AGO.
SAVAGE! YOU THINK BEING IMMORTAL EXCUSES YOU FROM SOCIETY'S RULES!
THE JUSTICE SOCIETY HAS STOPPED YOUR EVIL BEFORE..
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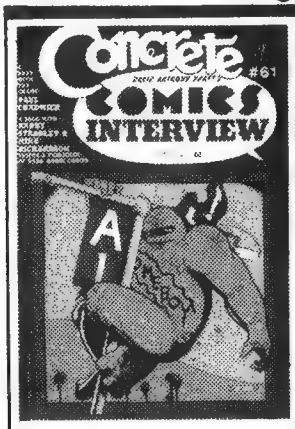

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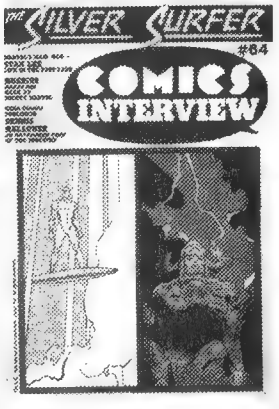

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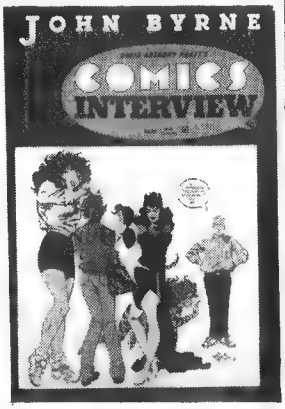

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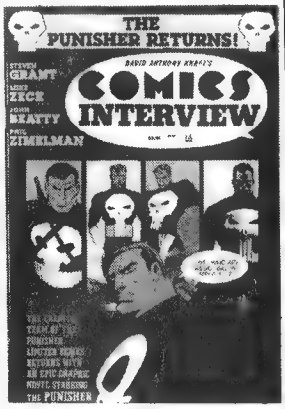

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"One of the charac IMAL FORCE is Dr. Mist."

Steven T. Seagle is the writer. The series is PRIMAL FORCE. Art from #0 is by Ken Hooper and Barbara Kaalberg.

science fiction."

MIKE: Yeah, a little bit.

KC: Actually, it is, yeah.

DON: *They're all around us. We just never knew it before.*

KC: One of the major characters in the PRIMAL FORCE scenario is a character named Dr. Mist. He's been around in the DC Universe, and has played some very contradictory roles in the DC Universe. We're going to find out a lot more about him.

MIKE: There's another character in there that you probably care a lot about, who used to call himself "Red Tornado." *(Laughter.)* Diabolical laughter, right?

DON: *There were people who thought he was a rip-off of the Vision. What they didn't realize was that the Red Tornado was there first!*

MIKE: Well, we can't know everything.

DON: *When you say that Dr. Mist has played contradictory roles in the DC Universe, do you mean in the sense of "apparent contradictions" that are cleared up by this, or in the sense that we can't really figure out what his true motives are?*

MIKE: It's not as simple as right or wrong, either. And that's what it boils down to — maybe even like a Dr. Doom character, where to the world he's a bad guy. To the people of Latveria, he's their savior. They love him. So there's always that dichotomy of who's to say?

DON: *As we speak, the election results in many of the former Soviet republics show that they would like closer ties with Russia.*

"There were years at DC where we all did our own

MIKE: Yep.
KC: When I said contradictory roles, what I meant was this character has had a history in the DC Universe. We've seen him before interacting with the Global Guardians. But there, we just saw him portrayed as a pretty straight superhero. There's a lot more levels of depth to him than that. And that's what we're going to find out in PRIMAL FORCE.
MIKE: He's a little more important than you thought he was.
KC: Yeah.
DON: *I can handle that. So he is the prime mover behind this group. Is the Red Tornado the only one we're familiar with?*
MIKE: No. There are other characters in there that, if you're a DC fan, you're familiar with them.
DON: *Well, let's hear about them.*
KC: There's a couple of other characters you'll recognize. The Jack O'Lantern character, who also got his start in the Global Guardians, and we've also seen him a number of times in the Giffen JUSTICE LEAGUE. He was a supporting character there as well. So this character actually has some ties to Dr. Mist, and so that's going to create an interesting situation for the book as well. There's also a *very surprising* character that you may or may not have known actually existed in DC continuity, who will be a part of PRIMAL FORCE —
MIKE: And it's not Dr. Doom.
KC: And it's not Dr. Doom.
DON: *And you're not gonna say who it is.*
KC: I'm not gonna spill that one.
MIKE: You haven't even told *me* who it is.
DON: *Boy, that's* secret!
MIKE: So you're not the only one left out of the loop here. *(Laughter.)*
KC: I'll have to tell you after this is over, Mike. *(Laughter.)*
MIKE: Okay.
DON: *Oh, grumble grumble grumble.*
KC: Mike mentioned R.E.B.E.L.S. 94 real quickly, but what we have here is a series that is doing a total make-over in its reason for existing. There's a real severe change of direction for the series here, and that's indicated in the change of the title, too. There's a lot implied in changing a title from one that says L.E.G.I.O.N. 94 to one that says R.E.B.E.L.S. 94.
DON: *Right. The word "terrorist" was mentioned earlier.*
KC: Yeah.
DON: *So, to some of the people of the galaxy they appear to be terrorists?*
MIKE: Uh huh.
KC: Yeah. And as you may suspect, they may be being set up, since we pretty much know them as heroes. But it's not as clear-cut as that, either.
DON: *Well, neither is terrorism when*

More from the first issue of PRIMAL FORCE, #0.

thing. We're putting everyone back in the same bottle."

you consider the point of view of the culture they come from.

KC: True.

MIKE: That's true.

DON: *If it were clear-cut, there would be no terrorists, right?*

KC: But the book is still going to fulfill its goal of exploring the DC Universe in the outer space aspect — exploring alien races and planets, things like that. It's that basically, we're just kicking up the energy level several notches by this.

DON: *Kicking up the energy level and resetting the clock.*

KC: Exactly. There's also a number of characters who aren't *immediately* spinning out into their own books, but they are still going to be playing a fairly big role in DC's universe. One of them we might mention is Impulse, a supporting character in the FLASH books right now, but his role is evolving and may ultimately be *very* big by the time his story unfolds.

DON: *Now, I understand he's joining the Justice League. Is that correct?*

KC: I believe that's a possibility, yeah.

MIKE: Actually, titles like JUSTICE LEAGUE and the NEW TITANS in particular — they're going to be infused with a lot of new characters. Some of them literally new, some of them in the Titans tradition of having the younger characters get together for adventures. And that will involve several characters like Supergirl and Green Lantern with the Titans. What we're trying to do is bring back to the DC Universe a lot of folks that have kind of strayed, as well. To integrate them more integrally into the big tapestry of the DC Universe. There were a lot of years here at DC where we all went off and did our own thing. And we're basically just trying to put everybody back in the same bottle.

KC: Another young character that makes a big impact in ZERO HOUR is a character already in his own book, by the name of Damage. He gets a very big play in ZERO HOUR, which will help to establish him as a stronger character in the DC Universe.

MIKE: He's very important to the DC Universe of the future.

DON: *Aha!*

MIKE: And actually, some of his past is what makes him that important.

DON: *But you're not going to tell us how, right?*

MIKE: No. *(Laughter.)* That's not even in the Zero issue. That's down the road.

KC: Basically, one of the things that happens — getting back to the generational saga of the ZERO HOUR story itself — is that it provides the event for the younger characters to come in contact with the old, established characters. And from there, it's like a start-off point for them to — not necessarily, like, pair off in a traditional pairing, but they meet heroes that they admire, and start talking to them and want to learn things from them. And you'll see that reflected back into the books following.

R.E.B.E.L.S. '94 #0 cover by Jorgensen & Pascoe.

MIKE: And a lot of these characters, basically *they're* there, and they leave with the approval of the established characters — whether it's people as established as the Justice Society members or just the Superman or Batman hero guys — which kind of validates them in their minds, and hopefully in the readers' minds, as real players in the DC Universe.

DON: *I gather, from a couple of offhand comments you've made, that the young guy winds up as Green Lantern.*

KC: Not necessarily.

MIKE: You can gather that, if you like.

DON: *Oh, come on!*

MIKE: You can!

DON: *You were talking about young guys in TITANS, like Green Lantern.*

MIKE: Yeah.

DON: *Okay. So —*

MIKE: But it's a time travel story.

DON: *Aw, man . . .*

MIKE: Please! Give us some credit here. *(Laughter.)*

DON: *But speaking of young characters — this is just a purely personal thing. What ever happened to Air Wave?*

MIKE: I guess he's still out there. He

"Sometimes it takes 30 years to find out if you're right or wrong."

hasn't —

KC: You're talking about the young, modern character?

DON: *Yeah. Hal Jordan's cousin, Hal Jordan.*

KC: From what I remember of the character, he was pretty inept and never had a whole lot of control over his powers. So you can extrapolate from that, that maybe he wasn't necessarily a successful hero.

MIKE: He may be a guy who is now just selling real estate somewhere — which we haven't shown, because it's just not that action-packed. *(Laughter.)*

DON: *I think there's room in the world for an inept superhero.*

MIKE: Don't worry — we still have some.

KC: We still do those. There's a whole —

MIKE: We write what we know! *(Laughter.)*

I guess basically, to sum it up — clearly, the Zero Hour event was — and this is the way our advertising ran — it was the end of something that kind of started for the readers right when CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS ran. That's when the first clues were laid.

DON: *And the first clues to the Crisis were laid in GREEN LANTERN in 1965*

MIKE: There you go. That's what holds the universe together.

KC: There's zillions of clues floating around for people that want to look for them. We're not gonna spell them all out for people, because part of the fun of being a fan is *finding* the stuff. I mean, we're all old-time fans, and we remember indexing this stuff and finding out all this back story stuff.

MIKE: You want to be the first on your block to come up with a theory that may turn out to be right. Sometimes it takes you 30 years to find out if you're right or wrong. And as creative people, we look towards the stuff of the past for something that we can hang our next story on. We are not looking to contradict that stuff. We are looking to build on it. But that doesn't mean every single story that came out is something that we're going to be able to hang the next big event on.

DON: *Basically, then, any contradictions you might have seen before, or thought you saw, are really not.*

MIKE: Well, they were, but we've solved the problem.

KC: There's some sort of explanation why it appears to have been a contradiction.

MIKE: The contradiction was put there by a character. And in some cases, we don't even know what the motivation for every contradiction was. Maybe it was just for anarchy's sake.

KC: It's probably a little too severe to say that they were all caused by a specific character. There's also a natural phenomenon that's going on, that one of our characters takes advantage of. And this is something that will unfold in ZERO HOUR as well.

MIKE: What you've seen in ZERO HOUR is that when I say that some bad guy did it — especially in the DC Universe. There's at least six — that I know of — time-traveling bad guys. And there's probably more that I don't remem-

GREEN LANTERN #0 cover detail by Banks & Tanghal.

"Zero Month is not the end of new beginnings at DC."

ber. So there's a lot of people messing with stuff and re-messing the other guy's work and unmessing their own work later on, and it just has stretched everything to the breaking point.

DON: *Have you guys ever read ILLUMINATUS?*

MIKE: Yes.

KC: I have, yeah.

DON: *Kind of like all of them running around contradicting each other, right?*

MIKE: It's true.

KC: It's a lot like that, yeah.

DON: *Now — have we covered all the things that spin off? All the new titles?*

MIKE: The other thing is — not just to look at things that are spinning out of it. Things like DARKSTARS will be different. And not even directly related to ZERO HOUR. It just is a time for some new stuff to happen in the DC Universe. Aquaman is going to be very different in the next couple of months. Deathstroke as well. People learn a lot of things about themselves in the next couple of months.

KC: GUY GARDNER, WARRIOR is going to continue, and he will evolve into a very fascinating character.

DON: *Really?*

MIKE: Yes, actually, he's very cool.

KC: You'll see a very big change in ZERO HOUR regarding him.

DON: *XENOBROOD. What about it?*

KC: XENOBROOD is kind of the first post-ZERO HOUR new series that we're launching. It doesn't really have any ties to ZERO HOUR at all, but it is a real good intergalactic space saga sort of thing. It's being lumped in because it's being launched in Zero Month, but it doesn't have the real strong ZERO HOUR ties that a lot of the other series have. It's basically a brand-new, fresh series that you're going to see open up from the very beginning.

MIKE: Actually, just so that you realize that Zero Month is not the end of new beginnings in the DC Universe, over the next couple of months there are still other series launching. Like BLACK LIGHTNING and POWER OF SHAZAM, things like that. So basically, this is the month to join, but we're not just going to just sit back and stop. We're really going full speed ahead.

DON: *So. Where do you see the DC Universe in five years?*

MIKE: On my resume. *(Laughter.)*

I just hope that it's still one of the premier universes in comics, which it always has been, and I think lately it has actually rejuvenated itself a little bit. I know KC feels the same way, that we're happy to be a part of making it stronger

Right: Various "zero" covers. Here, DARKSTARS by Mike Deodato Jr.

Left: DAMAGE by Marimon & McWeeney.

Right: THE RAY by Porter & Jones.

"You'll see acknowledgment of Vertigo things on the Time

and more cohesive. I would like it to not be a mess in five years.

KC: Yeah, we don't want to do this again in five years.

MIKE: Right. That's too soon.

DON: *CRISIS was what, ten years ago. right?*

KC: Nine years.

DON: *Oh, my God! I'm too old — too old.*

MIKE: But we're intending to stick by our guns this time, so we'll see what happens.

DON: *Last time you did this, in CRISIS, everybody just looked on it as kind of a license to do anything.*

MIKE: There's a little bit of an element of that to the ZERO HOUR month books, which will have already played by the time you're reading this. The month of DC books that come out the same time ZERO *HOUR* comes out — there's a real "anything goes" atmosphere going on. People should be pretty entertained by this — old and new fans.

KC: Part of the beauty — and the frustration of doing a time-travel story is that it allows you an "anything goes" atmosphere. And a lot of the creators took advantage of that and did some really

Ed Benes' pencils from GUNFIRE #0, written by Len Wein. Another action page can be found elsewhere in this interview.

Line, but generally they operate under their own aegis."

remarkable stuff.

MIKE: That's something about ZERO HOUR — and even Zero Month — and I've said this before, but I don't know if it's ever been in print. I've worked on crossovers at DC and at Marvel. *Nothing* has been as organized as this crossover. *Nothing* has entertained as much cooperation from the creative pool — writers and artists and people *dying* to participate and join in. It really has been gratifying, and it made it a lot more fun, because it was a lot of people working toward a common goal — I would be a liar if I said there wasn't some conflict here and there, but *nothing* like conflicts that I've dealt with in other crossovers.

KC: *Right.*

MIKE: They were about the characters. They were about the stories. They weren't about "How *dare* you? Who *are* you?" It was really fun.

DON: *Great.*

KC: Yeah. the concept was loose enough to allow for them to have a big input on the story if they wanted to, and we — and when I say "we" I mean **Dan Jurgens** and I and Mike — allowed for the fact that we wanted the other creators to bring the ideas into this project, rather than us dictating to them where we thought it should go — and like I say, a lot of the creators really responded to that well. They brought in some really incredible ideas and a number of the creators actually volunteered to help us propel our storyline through their series, which is even better. It was something that we weren't even counting on.

DON: *It sounds like a lot of story for five issues.*

KC: Yeah, that's basically it. It's a tough thing, but we wanted it to be a real *bang*. We didn't want it to drag out for a long time, as crossovers do. It's very —

MIKE: It's a way of pumping up the energy levels here, and it's worked out very well for us.

DON: *Some of the Vertigo series, like ANIMAL MAN and DOOM PATROL, have ties to the DC Universe. What happens to them? They don't have Zero issues, I take it.*

MIKE: The Vertigo stuff is pretty separate these days.

KC: Yeah. You'll see an acknowledgment of some of the Vertigo things on the Time Line itself, but generally they operate under their own aegis these days. I was in discussion with several of the Vertigo editors about ways to possibly tie in, but we kind of felt that it would be confusing the issues on both angles to do so.

DON: *Are you writing the Vertigo characters out?*

KC: No, absolutely not. They exist in the DC Universe.

MIKE: They're just not DC Universe titles. They say "Vertigo" on them.

KC: Yeah. It's a darker look at the universe.

DON: *But if Sandman happens to drop by Hell, and somebody happens to be in charge, then Batman happens to drop by Hell, it'll be the same guy in charge, right?*

KC: Theoretically.

MIKE: Theoretically, yeah.

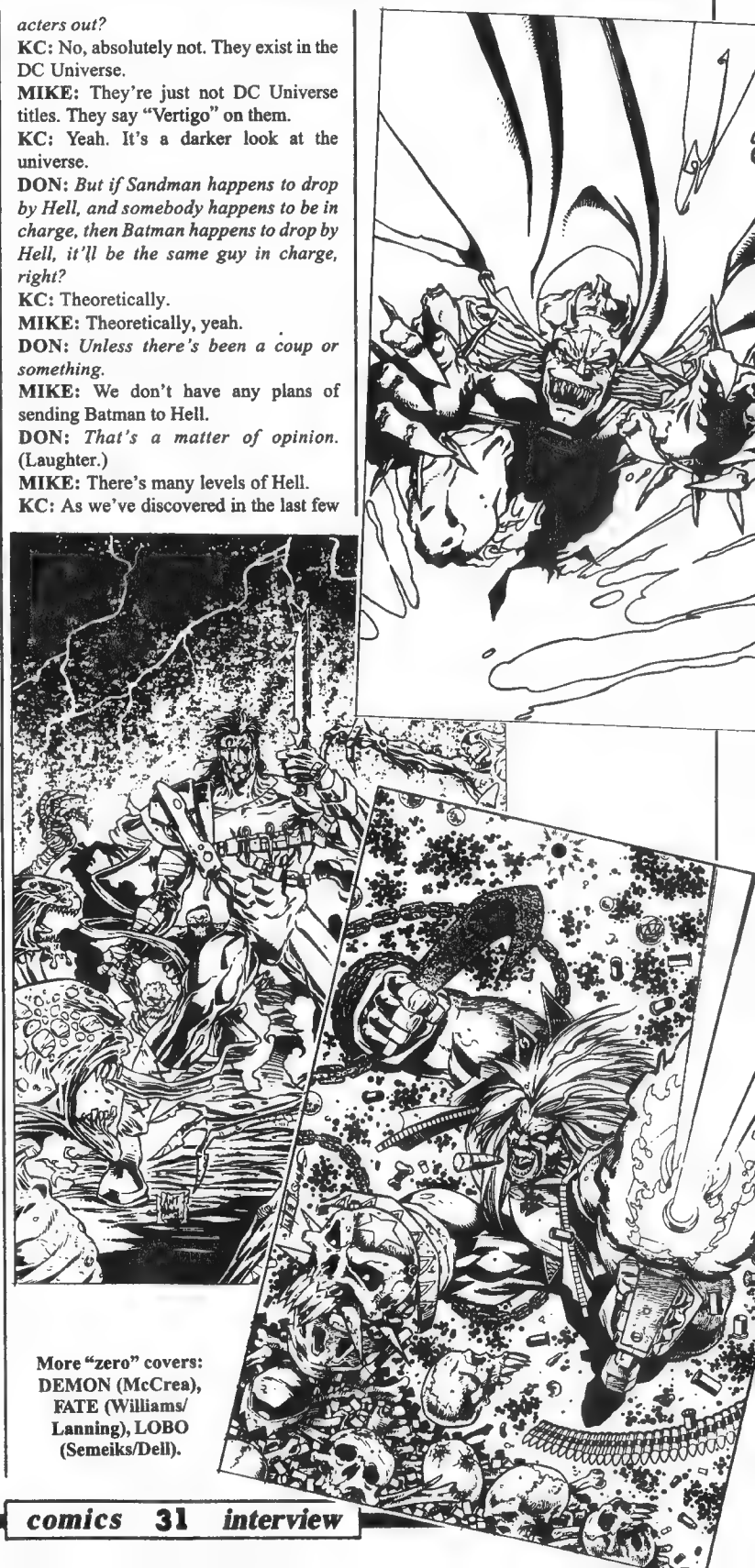
DON: *Unless there's been a coup or something.*

MIKE: We don't have any plans of sending Batman to Hell.

DON: *That's a matter of opinion.* (Laughter.)

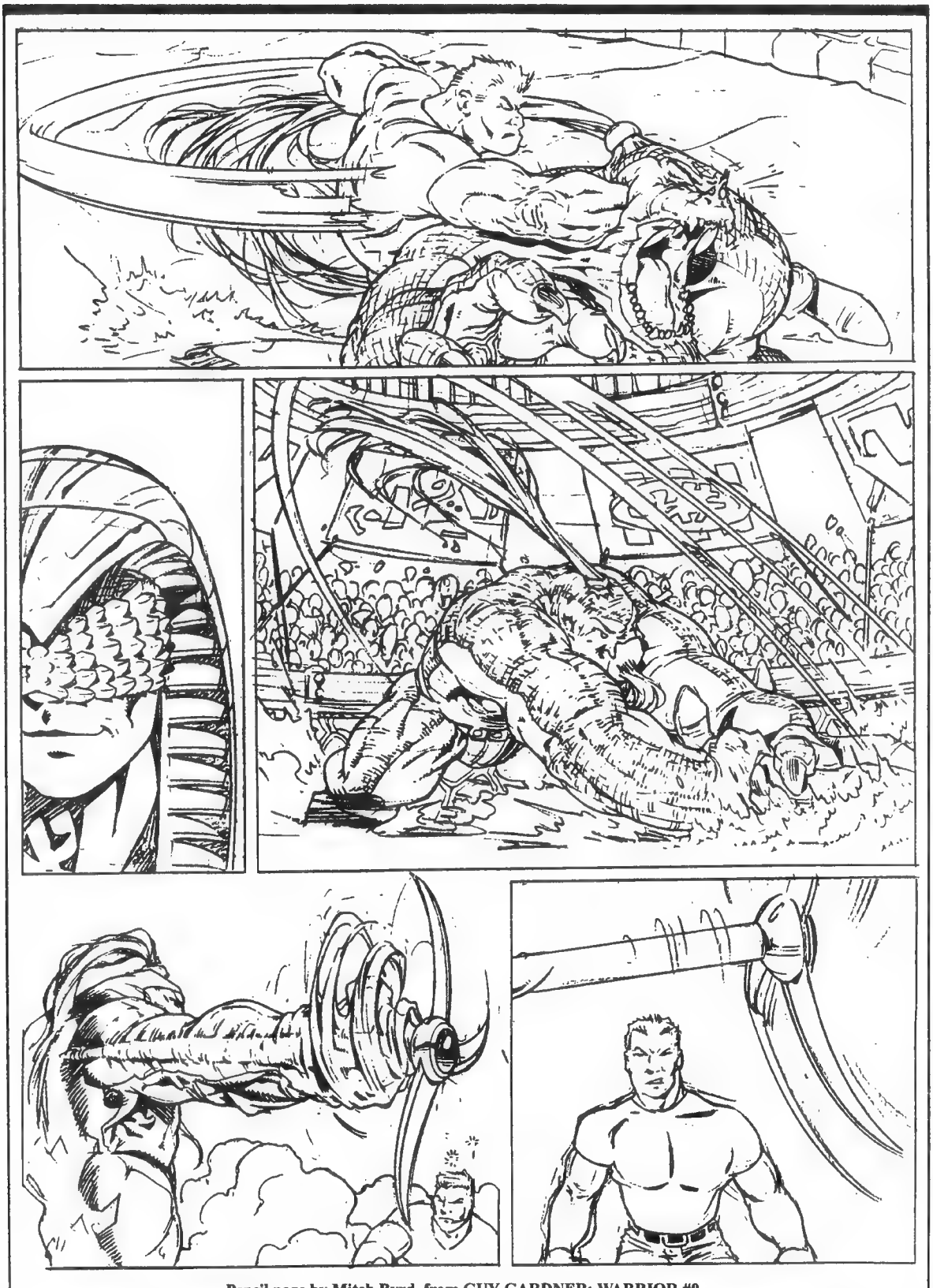
MIKE: There's many levels of Hell.

KC: As we've discovered in the last few



More "zero" covers: DEMON (McCrea), FATE (Williams/ Lanning), LOBO (Semeiks/Dell).

"This is an ongoing adventure, and you can't



Pencil page by Mitch Byrd, from GUY GARDNER: WARRIOR #0.

make the assumption that anything is finite."

months! *(Laughter.)*

MIKE: We discovered some in this interview! *(Laughter.)*

DON: *Well, it's been fun. Thanks a lot, guys!*

KC: It sounds like you came around to our way of thinking.

DON: *Well, I never was anything but your way of thinking* (laughter) *as far as the* legitimacy *of resetting the clock goes. I think it would be interesting to do an interview in the form of a debate — superhero universe, yes or no?*

MIKE: I'd say yes.

DON: *Well, obviously. And if you were to say yes, then I would take the "no" point of view, to make a lively debate.*

MIKE: I love guys like you! *(Laughter.)* There's a lot of them that work around here.

DON: *I'll bet! Anyway, given that you're going to have one, obviously, the easier it is to get in on the ground floor — Like I said, I'm looking forward to picking up a few of these titles myself, because I've lost track, and there's just* no way *I could pick up on a back story these days.*

MIKE: Well, this is a good way to test the waters again, and see if it's something that will anger you or something that you can get behind.

DON: *Anger me?*

MIKE: Well, that was your term.

DON: *Some things would disgust me —*

MIKE: Uh-huh.

DON: *— recent stuff in GREEN LANTERN for example. But anger? Like we said several times here, you can't take away my Hal Jordans. You can't take away your Porcupine Boy.*

KC: The other thing to consider, too, is that what you're seeing in a current issue of *anything* isn't necessarily the end of the story.

MIKE: That's right. This is an ongoing adventure — a never-ending battle, as they say.

KC: Exactly. Things happen to people and things evolve, and you can't always make the assumption that anything is finite.

MIKE: Like we said about the CRISIS setting up some of this stuff, and CRISIS itself being set up by things in GREEN LANTERN 30 years ago — there is no ending to this. There are endings in the midst of it, but the universe is never-ending.

DON: *"The road goes ever on."*

MIKE: That's right. We may not have seen the end of Hal Jordan.

DON: *Now, there's a clue!* (Laughter.)

More of Ed Benes's GUNFIRE pencils.

"I have two mini-series for Marvel; from

Jack C. Harris has been editing and writing comic books for the past 20 years. Before breaking into the business professionally, he was a vocal and prolific comics fan, living in Wilmington, Delaware. He was easily caught up in the first wave of the Silver Age of Comics, being on hand to read the premier issues of FLASH, GREEN LANTERN, JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, the FANTASTIC FOUR, the INCREDIBLE HULK and others. Early on, he set his goals toward the art side of comics, corresponding with various comics artists and studying art both in school and privately.

In 1969, after a three-year stint in the U.S. Army Signal Corps, he returned to his art studies at the Philadelphia College of Art (now the University of the Arts) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Majoring in illustration, Harris and three other students founded the college's first student-taught Liberal Arts course. It was entitled "the History of the American Comic Book." Securing guest speakers for the course from various New York-based comics companies (DC Comics and Marvel), Harris became acquainted with working editors, writers and artists in the field.

The college course on comics generated local attention and Harris was invited to write an article about it for a local Philadelphia teachers' magazine. was his first professional writing assignment. Upon graduating with a B.F.A. in illustration in 1974, Harris applied for and landed a job as an assistant editor for DC Comics, working with editor Murray Boltinoff. Over the next few years, Harris held various editorial, public relations and export posts at DC. He edited such titles as BLACKHAWK, GHOSTS, GREEN LANTERN, HOUSE OF MYSTERY, KAMANDI, LEGION OF SUPERHEROES, SECRET SOCIETY OF SUPER-VILLAINS, SECRETS OF HAUNTED HOUSE, SHADE — THE CHANGING MAN, SHAZAM, STARFIRE, TIME WARP, WARLORD and WORLD'S FINEST COMICS.

During that time, he also began to write stories for DC Comics, including Adam Strange, Batgirl, Black Canary, Gravedigger, Isis, Kamandi, Karate Kid, Legion of Superheroes, Robin, Supergirl and Wonder Woman as well as various mystery stories for HOUSE OF SECRETS, GHOSTS, WEIRD WAR STORIES and SECRETS OF HAUNTED HOUSE.

In 1981, hoping to expand his editing

Jack, as photographed by Jessica Harris.

JACK C. HARRIS

FANTASY MASTER ©1994 Jack C. Harris & Steve Ditko / DRAGONLANCE ©1990 DC Comics & TSR, Inc. / ANNEX, SPIDER-MAN TM & ©1994 Marvel Entertainment Group / THE RAY, BATMAN TM & ©1994 DC Comics, Inc. / DINO-RIDERS ©1988 Tyco Industries, Inc., published by Western Publishing Co., Inc. / MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS ©1994 Fruit of the Loom & Saban Entertainment / FREEDOM FLYERS ©1994 Actimagination, Inc., published by Western Publishing

DC is my Elseworlds Batman graphic novel."

The cover of the FANTASY MASTER "gaming comic" concept created by Harris & Ditko (pencils & inks by Steve Ditko).

and writing experience, Harris left DC. He went to work for Hobby Publications, based in New Jersey, as editor and art director for their hobby industry trade magazines. He continued his freelance writing activities during this time, breaking into the children's book field. In 1985, he left Hobby Publications and founded HARRISCRIPTS™, a freelance writing sole proprietorship. To date, he has written over 75 children's books featuring such licensed properties as Batman & Robin, Chuck Norris, Conan, Defenders of the Earth, Dino-Riders, Galaxy Rangers, Garfield, GoBots, Hawkman, James Bond, JURASSIC PARK, Legend of Zelda, Masters of the Universe, NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS, Photon, ROCKETEER, Snoopy, Super Mario Brothers and Young Indiana Jones.

He has also written a number of non-licensed books for children on such subjects as jet skis, adventure games, plastic model kits, fire engines and boats.

In 1991, Harris returned to comics with his creation of The Ray for DC Comics. Since that time, he has expanded his comics work to include work for Marvel Comics and a special project for DC.

Tony Stevens, a local comics fan living hear Harris' Toms River, New Jersey home, spoke with him about his return to comics and his career in general. Stevens is a college student majoring in English with aspirations of a writing career. This interview with Jack C. Harris was conducted over the phone and in person in early July, 1994.

TONY STEVENS: *You appear to be very busy in the comics industry lately. Exactly what do you have out right now?*
JACK C. HARRIS: Currently, I have two mini-series for Marvel: SPIDER-MAN: WEB OF DOOM and ANNEX. Coming out in November, from DC Comics, is my Elseworlds Batman graphic novel, CASTLE OF THE BAT.
TONY: *It's been a while since you wrote such a body of work for the comic books. How did you get back into it?*
JACK: Well, it actually began some

"I work on a project for months, revising ideas."

years ago when I received a call from **Mike Gold.** At the time, he was still an executive editor for DC Comics. Back when he was with First Comics in Chicago, Mike had viewed a proposal **Steve Ditko** and I had submitted to him for a "game comic;" sort of a "choose-your-own-path" story in comic-book form, entitled FANTASY MASTER. We had contracts signed and everything, but it just never came to pass.

When Mike was back at DC, the company had the TSR license and were trying to create new forms for translating the gaming characters to comics. Mike remembered my proposal and wanted me to develop something along the lines of FANTASY MASTER for the TSR/DC comics. I worked on such a project for months, submitting and revising a slew of ideas. Finally, the whole thing landed on **Elliot Maggin's** desk, who was a DC editor at the time as well. I began making regular trips into New York for various lunch meetings with Mike and Elliot. The process was very slow since everything I did had to be passed along to TSR for approval. Since it was taking so long, I asked Elliot if I couldn't be working on something else while waiting for the go-ahead on the TSR project. He offered me a chapter in a DRAGONLANCE ANNUAL he was working on. I worked up a

Tim Gula's pencils of the hobgoblin FEH in the DRAGONLANCE story that marked Jack's return to comics.

"I was thrilled at working with artist Joe Quesada."

short tale of some dirty little hobgoblins and wrote it strictly for laughs. Elliot loved it.

However, circumstances came to pass that resulted in Elliot leaving DC before the annual was completed. Rather than try to pick up where he left off, DC and TSR cancelled the book. But taking Elliot's place was editor **Jim Owsley.** Looking at the inventory of cancelled work, **Owsley** came across my chapter and he loved it too. He called me in and, with a minimum of re-write, the annual chapter appeared on its own as a back-up in DRAGONLANCE #28. I was back into comics.

TONY: *Then how did THE RAY come about?*

JACK: Well, I asked Jim the same thing as I had Elliot: While waiting for the TSR project to get the go-ahead, what else can I do for you? He showed me a list of currently-unused DC-owned characters. One of them was the Ray. I really liked that character. When I was very young, I had seen a drawing of an obscure superhero in an old comic book. I copied that panel over and over again because I loved the style of art. I learned later that it was a **Lou Fine** drawing. **Lou Fine** was one of the artists on the original 1940s Ray. I loved his work, so I used to search out old Ray comics at conventions. When I edited FREEDOM FIGHTERS, I even selected The Ray to appear as a back-up in BLACK LIGHTNING during the infamous "DC Explosion" in the 1970s.

Jim gave me the go-ahead to try and come up with something using The Ray. Instead of just reviving him, I thought it would be more fun to make up a whole new character with ties to the original. As luck would have it, DC severed its TSR licensing agreement, so I was able to put my full attention towards THE RAY mini-series.

TONY: *What was it like doing a regularly-scheduled comic book again, after so many years?*

JACK: I enjoyed a great deal of the experience, while other aspects of it frustrated me no end. I was thrilled at working with artist **Joe Quesada.** He was brand-new then and this was his first major work. It was great seeing him develop and grow with each page. We did the book by the "plot & dialogue" method rather than full-script, so Joe had a great deal to do with the pacing and the overall story-telling. He did a great job.

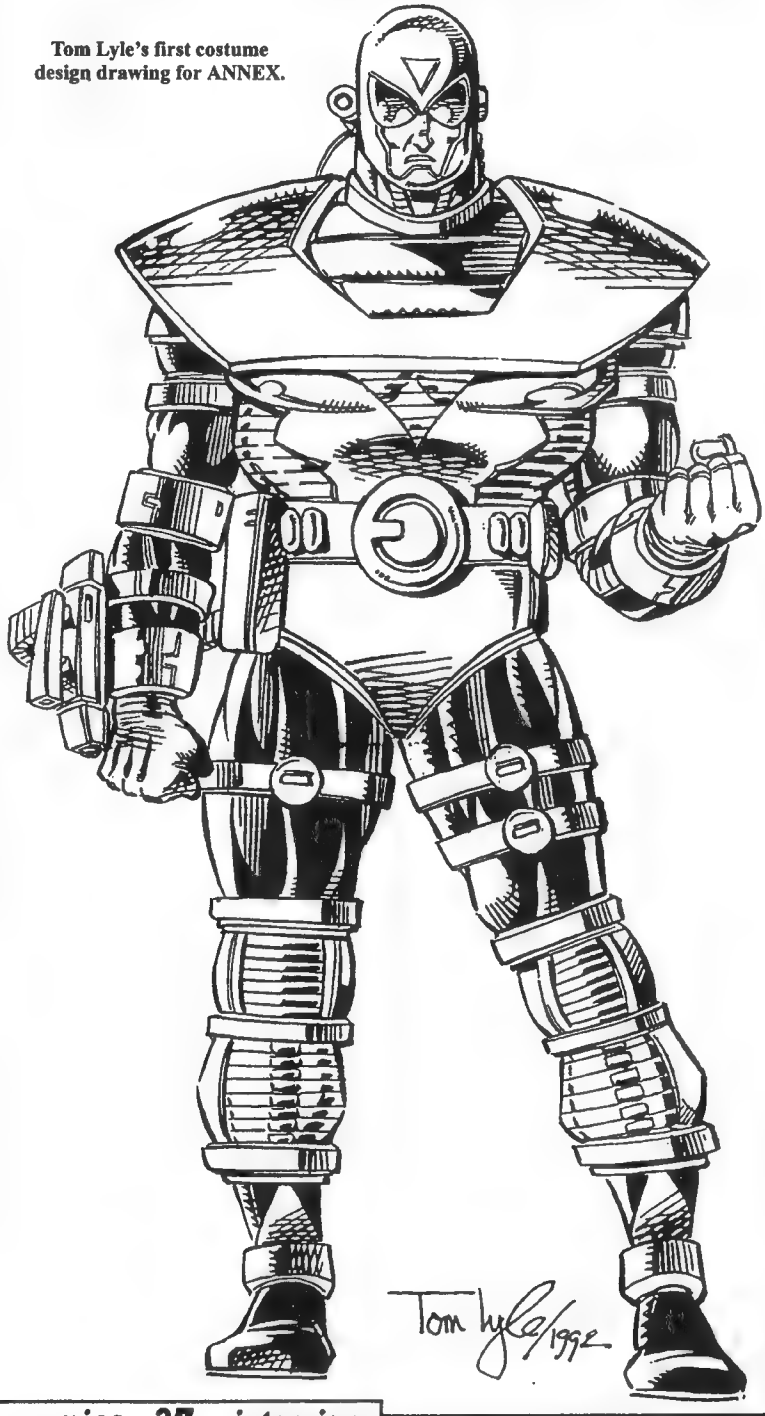
TONY: *What were some of the frustrations?*

JACK: One of the objections I had was the lack of publicity for the series. DC's contention was that it was an unproven property, drawn by a new artist and written by a writer who'd been out of the industry for half a decade. They felt there was nothing really to promote. I was of the opinion that these were the *very reasons* a publicity push was warranted. In the end, I was proud it did so well and caused so much attention without being "pushed."

TONY: *Why didn't he get his own series right away?*

JACK: You'll have to ask DC that one. When the second issue came out, I was told that it was going to get its own book. Later, I was told that only a second six-

Tom Lyle's first costume design drawing for ANNEX.



"Ever since I started using a computer, I have stored ideas

issue mini-series was planned. Finally, they said maybe a four-issue mini-series. Then, nothing.

TONY: *Why aren't you writing the new DC RAY series? After all, you did create the character.*

JACK: That's another question you'll have to ask DC. I've asked them the same thing, and I have never really received a clear answer. All I know at this point is that it was some kind of "editorial decision," to go with someone else.

TONY: *How do you feel about not doing it?*

JACK: I have mixed feelings. Since I *am* the creator, I receive royalties for the character, so part of me wants it to succeed. On the other hand, if I were writing the book, I would take it in far different directions than it's currently headed.

TONY: *Would you write it again if they offered it to you?*

JACK: I would love to take the reigns of THE RAY again, but there would be certain stipulations attached which I'm not sure the DC powers-that-be would agree to. It's really something that I would only discuss privately with them.

On the other hand, writing THE RAY mini-series *did* get me additional work from Marvel.

TONY: *How did that happen?*

JACK: Marvel editor **Danny Fingeroth** had either read or noticed THE RAY somewhere and liked what he saw. He said that certain elements of Ray Terrill's personality reminded him of the early Spider-Man characterization. He called me up and asked if I'd like to try and do some SPIDER-MAN issues. We met in New York and over a few lunches we tossed around a great many ideas.

A direct result of these plotting sessions was the WEB OF DOOM storyline. I was hard at work plotting the first issue when I received *another* call from Danny. He said that he needed a lead story for the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL and would I be interested? He said that the across-the-line connection that year was that each annual was going to introduce a new character. I jumped at this opportunity. The only hitch was that they needed the plot in just under a week!

Ever since I started using a computer, I have stored ideas on disks. I popped in a disk I keep that is exclusively for new character ideas. I sent three of these to Danny. He liked portions of each one. Combined, they became the character Annex. I worked very hard and very fast on this and did indeed finish the plot in under a week.

TONY: *It must have been a success.*

JACK: I was as lucky with Annex as I was with The Ray as far as artists were concerned. Artist **Tom Lyle** had just come off the successful ROBIN series at DC. He was tapped to do Annex's debut in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #27. It was his very first Spider-Man assignment. He designed the Annex armor and the "look" of Alex Ellis, Annex's alter-ego. His art really sold the issue. It ended up being the best-selling annual of the year.

TONY: *And that success led to the mini-series?*

JACK: Yes, although we had one other story to test the waters, too. Annex also appeared as a back-up in SPIDER-MAN UNLIMITED #3. The two appearances led to his own current four-issue mini-series.

TONY: *Who's drawing it now?*

JACK: A young artist named **Walter McDaniel** started it out. Unfortunately, other commitments and his inexperience at storytelling forced him to bow out before the completion of the first issue. Keep your eye out for his future work, though, because I think he has some real superstar potential.

Dave Clystek's pencils of Spider-Man's guest appearance in ANNEX #3.

on disks. I popped in a disk I keep for new characters."

An artist named **Dave Clystek** has taken over the ANNEX mini-series now and he's terrific. He's given Annex's ability to download any weapon he needs a fluid look, very similar to the morphing techniques in the TERMINATOR 2 film, but he does it on paper. It's a marvelous effect.

TONY: *What, exactly, are Annex's powers? And how did you come up with the concept?*

JACK: Annex was inspired by my old computer. The first computer I used would freeze up every time I tried to run too many programs at once. I thought it would be fun if a hero had a computerized armor that had the same problem — he could download anything he needed, but if he used too many, the whole thing would shut down.

TONY: *And how about his secret identity, Alex Ellis?*

JACK: Alex Ellis is a Desert Storm war veteran who lost his leg in the conflict. He's based on a news story that came out after the war about the low-tech artificial limbs the army was using. I picked that up right out of the newspaper. It was a great springboard for the story.

TONY: *Which leg did he lose?*

JACK: *(Laughter.)* Well, that's a bit confusing. In the first two stories, AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #27 and SPIDER-MAN UNLIMITED #3, it's his *left* leg that's missing. However, in the mini-series, it's his *right!* I think we'll have to issue an old-fashioned "Marvel No-Prize" for anyone who can explain our way out of that one.

TONY: *How has ANNEX been received so far?*

JACK: Early returns are pretty good, but that's normal for any first issue these days. **Danny Fingeroth** wants to make him an integral member of the Spider-Man universe, so I think his future is secure.

TONY: *What about the other series, WEB OF DOOM?*

JACK: As I said, I began working on that long before ANNEX. I picked up on something **Danny Fingeroth** had said about The Ray; about how it reminded him of the old Spider-Man characterization. I remembered too, about how Spider-Man was a loner and how everyone hated him. I thought we could create a situation where that could happen again. So we sent his wife, Mary Jane, out on location for some film work in South America. For the first time in years, Spider-Man had no one to confide in. On top of that, he was being accused of a wrongful death. I think it really stretches back to the old conflicts he faced when he first began.

WEB OF DOOM #1 pencils by Scott Kollins. Story: Harris.

TONY: *And the art on that one?*

JACK: This is a case of an artist being too good. **Scott Kollins** signed on for WEB OF DOOM after his successful HAWKEYE series. But because we shelved WEB OF DOOM to work on ANNEX, by the time we got back to it, Scott had been offered some really lucrative assignments elsewhere. I couldn't hold it against him at all for snatching them up.

But again, I was lucky. **Anthony Williams** and **Sam De La Rosa** picked up the art chores and ran with it. They're turning out some very exciting work. It's very easy to write from and they interpret my plots very well. I really like the way they designed the new characters.

TONY: *What new characters are those?*

JACK: I invented a group called the Beta Brigade which is part of the Extreme Emergency Team, which has already

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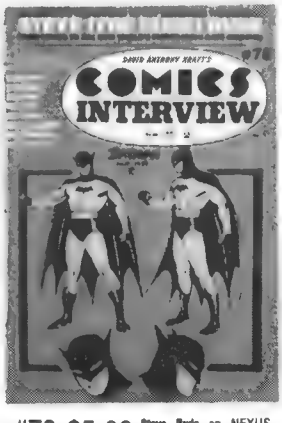

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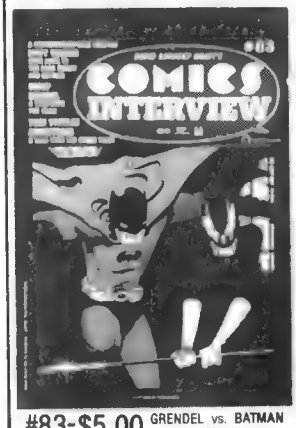

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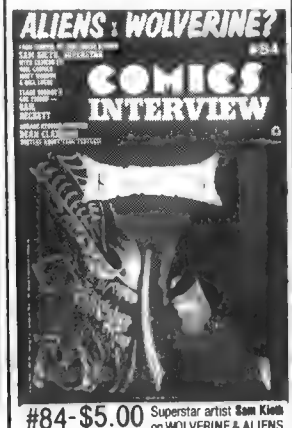

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"People at Marvel are the most professional I've worked with."

been established in the Spider-Man universe. Originally, we were going to use the Code: Blue characters who have appeared in THOR. In fact, we started out with a different villain as well.

TONY: *Why all the changes?*

JACK: It was really due to the professionalism of the various Marvel editors. Each one of them is very protective of the characters under their care. They actually become jealous if someone else wants to cross-over someone in another book. At the same time, they're busy weaving the continuity of their own books. When someone outside of their editorial control uses some of their cast, it wreaks havoc on their continuity. **Mark Powers,** the editor of the WEB OF DOOM mini-series, thought it was easier to create our own team of specialized police than to use one already established elsewhere. This way we can control every aspect of the characters rather than having someone else constantly looking over our shoulders.

And since this is a mini-series, it takes place outside the regular SPIDER-MAN titles' storyline. The main writers had major plans for the villain that was originally tapped for the mini-series, so we changed it halfway through.

TONY: *Who was the original villain? And who is the villain now?*

JACK: I'm not going to say . . . giving away that information might spoil some of the surprises planned in both the mini-series and the regular titles.

TONY: *Do you find all these changes along the way annoying?*

JACK: Not at all. The only changes I hate are the arbitrary ones. But arbitrary changes don't seem to happen to me at Marvel. The people I'm working with at Marvel are some of the most professional I've worked with ever. They have an "editorial policy," which I think has been missing from the industry's editors for a decade or more. There were too many "editors" out there who were just "packaging" the art for too long. Now these people have a set direction they feel the

Joe Quesada's first character sketch of Jack's creation, The Ray.

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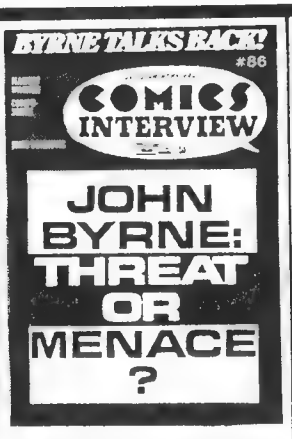

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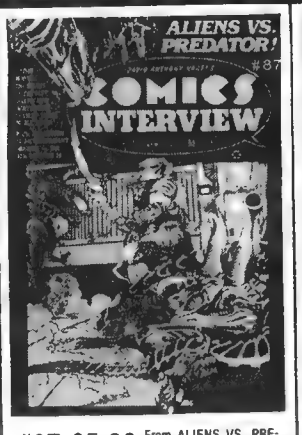

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"CASTLE OF THE BAT was written with Wrightson in mind."

characters under their editorial control should have. They work hard at maintaining a consistency in their titles.

TONY: *You mean continuity?*

JACK: It goes beyond just making the stories fit into a set "universe." They're concerned about how characters act and react; they want to make certain that not only Spider-Man is the same character in every title, but Jonah Jameson, Mary Jane and all the others are consistent from title to title, too.

TONY: *Is this attitude exclusive to Marvel, in your experience?*

JACK: No, not at all. Individual editors all over the industry show these qualities, but Marvel seems to be able to cultivate the attitude with some of these younger editors. They seem to have the tightest group of such editors. **Denny O'Neil** over at DC is one of the best at this and he appears to give his assistants some of his insight too.

TONY: *What about this "special project" for DC that you're doing?*

JACK: It's an Elseworlds graphic novel featuring an alternate-world version of the Batman. It's called CASTLE OF THE BAT.

TONY: *What can you tell us about it?*

JACK: I always liked the "What If" and "Imaginary Stories" concept. Taking established characters and setting them down in completely different surroundings expanded possibilities limitlessly. As long as you firmly established that such tales were out of the realm of continuity, they were the purest "fun" a writer could have in creating a story featuring ongoing, familiar characters.

I had read the BATMAN & DRACULA: RED RAIN Elseworlds story by **Doug Moench, Kelley Jones** and **Malcolm Jones III** and thought about the other Universal monsters such as the Wolfman and Frankenstein. One day, as I was riding the elevator up to DC's 28th floor offices the whole idea of CASTLE OF THE BAT just popped into my head. I walked right into **Denny O'Neil's** office and said, "What if Bruce Wayne were Dr. Frankenstein and instead of *becoming* the Batman, he *builds* him?" Denny leaned back and said, "That's a good one. Write a proposal." I'd sold the idea with a single question!

TONY: *Are graphic novels handled differently than regular comics, when it comes to the scripts?*

JACK: Not really. CASTLE OF THE BAT was written as full script. The script was 163 pages long and it floated around the DC offices for a year looking for an artist. I wrote it with **Bernie Wrightson** in mind. I really loved his rendition of the Frankenstein monster and thought he would be perfect. But Bernie had too many prior commitments. For a time, **Mike Mignola** was considering doing it, but that fell through too.

More of Clystek's pencils from ANNEX #3 — showing the character's "morphing" technique for changing out of his armor.

TONY: Who is *your artist?*

JACK: CASTLE OF THE BAT is being

"Hampton rented all the old Universal

painted by **Bo Hampton.** I actually found him myself. Years ago, when I was an editor at DC, I gave **Scott Hampton,** Bo's brother, his first work in comics. Last October, at the big Philadelphia comics convention, I met Bo for the first time. In conversation, I mentioned the CASTLE OF THE BAT project and Bo expressed a definite interest. As luck would have it, **Scott Peterson, Denny O'Neil's** assistant at the time, was also attending the convention. When I saw Scott later in the day, I told him that he should to talk to **Bo Hampton** about the possibility of doing CASTLE. It turned

Dr. Bruce Wayne explains his unorthodox animal experiments to Dr. Selsam as his fathful manservant Alfredo leads in the Bat-Hound in CASTLE OF THE BAT, a DC Comics Elseworlds story written by Jack C. Harris. (Note: This story was originally done with Bernie/Berni Wrightson in mind. Jack: "I really loved his rendition of the Frankenstein monster and thought he would be perfect. For a time, Mike Mignola was considering doing it." Bo Hampton is the artist/painter for the graphic novel.

FRANKENSTEIN films and studied them."

out that Bo had already looked Scott up and asked to do the book. By the time the Monday after the convention rolled around, Bo had the assignment.

TONY: *What do you think of his approach to the story, from what you've seen so far?*

JACK: **Bo Hampton** is doing remarkable work. He went out and rented videos of all the old Universal Pictures FRANKENSTEIN films and studied them for the feel, mood and atmosphere. I think he's captured that ambience expertly. There were one or two pages he's painted that look exactly like my mind's-eye vision of the story. It was eerie seeing them. It was like he'd read my mind.

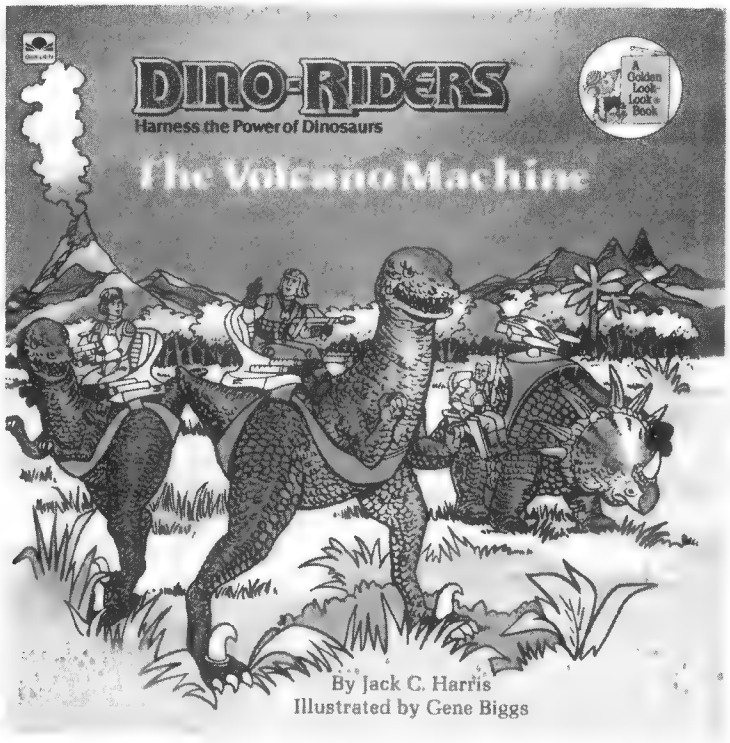
I can't think of any two realms that fit together better than the world of Batman and the world of the Frankenstein Monster. The mood and mysterious atmosphere of both worlds accent each other perfectly.

TONY: *And Denny O'Neil is editing this?*

JACK: Yes, and that's very gratifying for me. **Denny O'Neil** bought my very first solo comic script 'way back in 1975. He was also one of the first comic-book professionals I ever got to know on a personal basis. So working with him again on CASTLE OF THE BAT is a delight. And, as ever, he is the consummate editor. In the early stages of plotting the story, there was a very large, very important segment that I thought was extremely consequential to the project. With a single comment, Denny pointed out that it was not only unnecessary to the story, but it actually detracted from the main thrust of the tale. With that one suggestion of omission, the whole story came together much stronger and more compact. It proved to me that **Denny O'Neil** still "has it."

TONY: *With all of this comic-book work, do you still do children's books? And how are they different from writing for the comics?*

JACK: Yes, I'm still very actively working on children's books. Writing them can be far more relaxing than comic books. They're more straightforward. A standard children's book is like plotting an 8-page, self-contained comic-book story. You only need one gimmick per story. But this doesn't necessarily make them easier to write. There are other concerns. Children's-book publishers are far more concerned with vocabulary and violence than comic-book publishers. Their market, for the most part, are parents, teachers and school librarians. They are the people ordering and buying the books. Comic books are sold right to the people who are going to read them. Children's books are almost never bought by the people they're written for; someone buys them for them. Children's book publishers are very aware of this and keep up-to-date on the current concerns of the people purchasing their books. They pass this on to the writers and artists.



DINO-RIDERS: THE VOLCANO MACHINE, one of over 75 children's books that Jack has written.

Another big difference is the licensors. Most of the children's books I've done feature licensed characters, such as Garfield, Indiana Jones, etc. In all of these cases, my manuscript, as well as the art, had to be approved by the owners of the characters. It makes for an extra step. In comics, I just have to please the editor. In children's books, I have to please the editor and the licensor. It gives you less time to work on the books since there are more steps. The same is true with some comics when they feature properties from other media, such as MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS.

TONY: *That's right! It was announced that you were going to write the comic-book version of MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS. In fact, there was even a full-color ad in the promotional books from the distributors. What happened?*

JACK: Yes, **Gary Leach,** the editor at Gladstone, called me up in January of this year and asked me to submit a proposal for a series based on the show. It was just starting to hit big. I watched a few episodes and wrote it all up, giving the characters last names and family backgrounds. They loved it. I did five scripts and a spin-off script for a GREEN RANGER comic.

TONY: *Again, what happened?*

JACK: Gladstone had some difficulties with the organization handling the American version of the property. I was not privy to all the details, although I do believe it had something to do with someone's trouble understanding "comic-book art." I thought the artist who did my stories, **Al Bigley,** was terrific.

TONY: *So none of your and Al Bigley's POWER RANGERS material ever saw print?*

JACK: Only one issue of MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS by myself and **Al Bigley** was published . . . it only appears as a giveaway in some Fruit of the Loom underwear packages. It will probably be a collector's item pretty fast. I've already hoarded my copies away.

Some of my POWER RANGERS scripts were approved, so they'll prob-

"Controversy is dying down. The market is leveling off.

ably eventually appear. But I have no idea when or where.

TONY: *Since you're a full-time writer, what's your work day like?*

JACK: I work eight or more hours a day. I get up by 5:30 or 6:00 and am at my home office desk by 7:30. I have daily files next to me. Anything that didn't get finished the day before gets placed in the front of today's file and I tackle things in order. I never like to do the same thing two times in a row. I'll work on a comic book one day and a children's book the next. Then a magazine column will follow that. Of course, I'm flexible. If an editor calls for a deadline, I can always put something into tomorrow's files and jump in for his or her needs.

TONY: *Don't you feel cut off by not working in a big city like New York?*

JACK: That could happen if I let it. However, every other Thursday I do go into New York City. I make the rounds, stopping at DC, Marvel and the book publishers, dropping off work, picking up assignments and making sure new doors get opened. I spend a good five hours a week seeking out new clients. I look at the publishing trade magazines, write letters, make phone calls. I'm always looking for new avenues of work. It's dangerous for any freelancer to depend on any one source of income — even something as lucrative as comics are these days.

TONY: *How do you feel when you see some of the younger comics professionals enjoying such overwhelming success?*

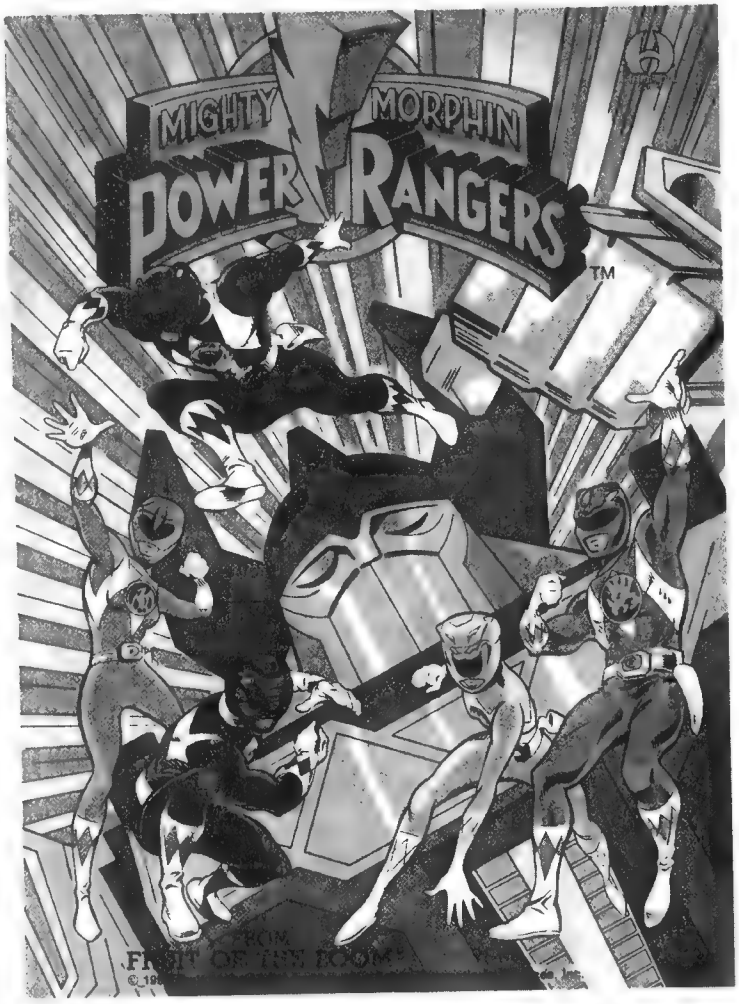
JACK: The comics industry is much kinder to its creators these days. With creator-owned properties and royalties, it's much easier to make a living exclusively with comics than it was in past years. I love seeing the new generation of artists and writers make it today. One example is **Dave Lapham.** Dave's mother and my wife worked together years ago. I saw all of Dave's early attempts. I encouraged him and watched him grow as an artist. He used to baby-sit my kids and sit there and read my complete collection of FANTASTIC FOUR comics. I remember once coming home and asking him how things went. He said, "It was great! I've always wanted to read those first Galactus stories!" And I said, "No, I meant, 'How did the *baby-sitting* go?'" Dave's moved far beyond those "fanboy" days, I'm happy to say.

TONY: *After 20 years, how do you think writing for comics has changed?*

JACK: The first comics I read were very distinct in their story-telling. They were filled with explanatory captions, making doubly certain every action was carefully justified. One joke we used to tell about that was a panel from a 1950s SUPERMAN issue. The panel showed Superman melting an iceberg with his heat vision. The caption read, "Superman melts the iceberg with his heat vision." And in the same panel, Superman is thinking, "I'll use my heat vision to melt this iceberg." They were very concerned that readers would somehow misinterpret what was going on. They took their characters from A to Z with all the letters in-between.

In the '60s, when many of the early fans began turning pro, people such as **E. Nelson Bridwell** and **Roy Thomas** helped point out that the reading comprehension for comic-book readers was higher than previously believed. Less non-essential captions appeared; less explanation of what the artwork clearly showed was used. Now the creators were taking their characters from A to C, only having to provide the B.

Today, many stories were going from A to C with nothing in between. For a while, I thought this was a flaw. But then someone pointed out that this may very well be a product of the video-game generation. We writers were used to providing, for our readers, the B between the A and C. In a video game, the players have to provide their own B; they were responsible for getting the characters from one place to another. Creators of this generation were doing the same in the stories, letting the readers mentally fill in the "blanks" between two seemingly-unrelated actions. When looking at some of them with this in mind, it seems to be as



The MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS mini-comic by Harris and Al Bigley. It is the only comic in existence featuring these characters — until November, at least!

Creators and publishers are becoming more professional."

FREEDOM FLYERS, another of the children's books written by Harris.

justified as any earlier form of story-telling, at least for some people. I wouldn't want to structure a story that way, but I can't say that it's any less valid for today's readership.

TONY: *How about the way many creators are so vocal now, coming out against publishers, comic-collecting speculators and even other creators?*

JACK: I think "controversy" in the comics industry is dying down. The "collectibles" market is beginning to level off and relationships between creators and publishers are becoming more and more professional. Of course, I believe it was the controversy that made all of this possible. If controversial issues come up again, I hope it won't take as long for voices to be heard before justifiable changes are made.

TONY: *How do you know what readers will like? Do you go to conventions and talk to fans?*

JACK: Oh, yes, but with three school-age daughters, my family life is very, very active. I don't have the opportunity to go to that many conventions. However, I always drop into my local comics shop, Steve's Comic Relief. I also meet every other week with the Jersey Shore Science Fiction Society, a group of science-fiction fans made up of computer programmers, librarians, merchants and others. We meet at a local library branch and discuss everything from comics to movies, from politics to world affairs and, on occasion, science fiction. They are a great collective sounding board. They're great critics, too. They won't hold back to tell you what they like or don't like. And best of all, they can tell you why.

TONY: *So what lies in your future with the comics industry and your other freelance work?*

JACK: I have submissions for characters and ideas out to DC, Marvel and a few others. I also am working with yet another children's book publisher and helping develop a seminar series for the hobby industry. I have to keep diverse. It's one of the most important lessons I've learned as a struggling freelancer. But comic books are still my favorite writing media. Whenever I have the opportunity to work in comics, I'll jump at it, even if it means putting some other project on the back burner for a while.

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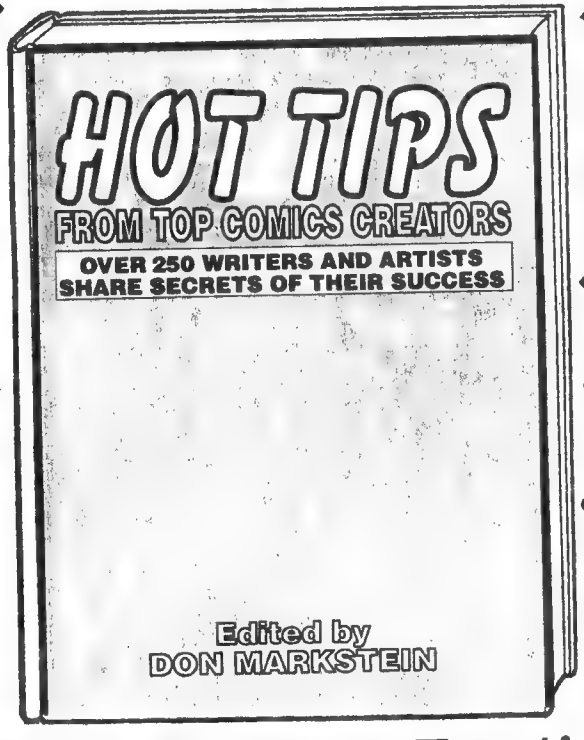

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"This is the second time an independent has had a 100th issue."

DON MARKSTEIN

For the past quarter-century or so, Don Markstein has been doing "this and that" in and around comics and publishing in general. Lately, he's been in the comics news with the publication of HOT TIPS FROM TOP COMICS CREATORS, which he edited. In November, he'll be in the news again, when the Markstein-scripted MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS comic book hits the stands . . .

CHARLES S. NOVINSKIE: *Any fires out your way?*

DON MARKSTEIN: No fires in the immediate vicinity, but we do have some Africanized bees.

CHARLES: *Eww!*

DON: Yeah, they've reached the Phoenix metropolitan area.

CHARLES: *No kidding!*

DON: Yes, they have entered the United States. Some people were attacked by them just last week.

CHARLES: *Do you have cable out there?*

DON: Yes, we have cable out here. Even here in the middle of the desert, we have cable. *(Laughter.)* But we don't personally have it in this house.

CHARLES: *Are you familiar with a show on the USA Network called DUCKMAN?*

DON: I've seen promos and things for it.

CHARLES: *We're doing that as a comic book at Topps.*

DON: Oh, *really?!* I want it! My first name is Donald. My middle initial is D. I am destined for ducks.

CHARLES: *Too late! It's already assigned. I guess we should get started on your involvement in comics.*

DON: Oh, I go back years and years and years. I bought FANTASTIC FOUR #1 off the stands. I'd been reading comics for a while then. I guess my earliest were about 1952. I go back and pick up old comics, and the ones I remember start in '52. I remember EC and CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES. I started wheeling and dealing in old comics in the 1960s, just like everybody. And going to conventions — and *organizing* conventions in the 1960s and '70s.

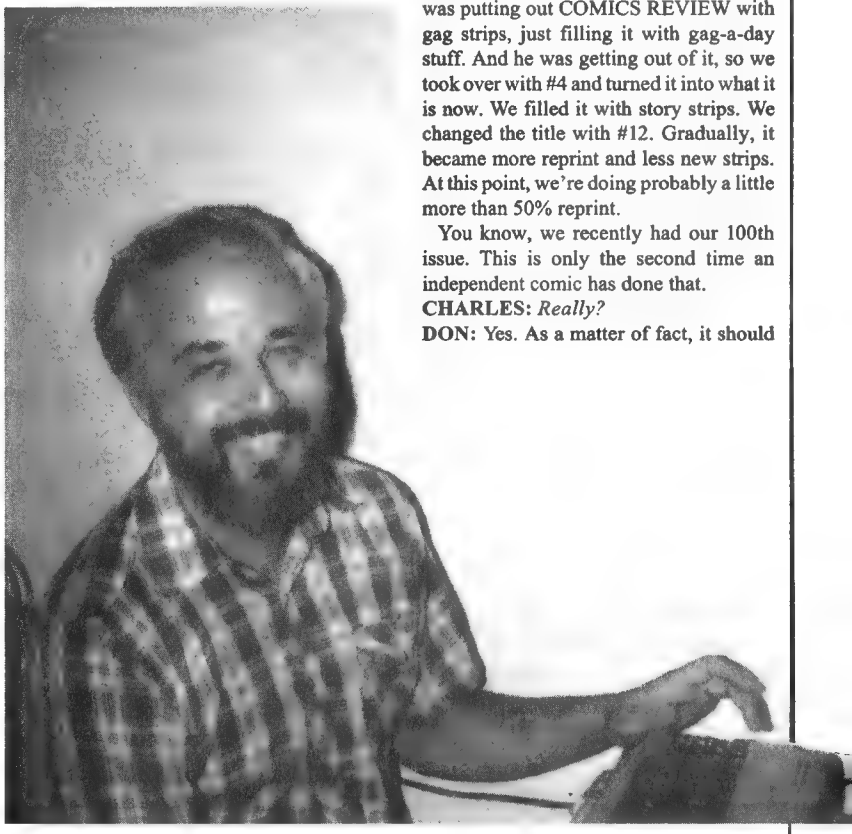
CHARLES: *In what part of the country?*

DON: The South. I'm originally from New Orleans. I've known COMICS REVUE and PRINCE VALIANT publisher **Rick Norwood**, who's also from Southern Louisiana, for years and years and years. We go back to the '60s.

CHARLES: *So you were involved as a fan?*

DON: Oh, yes. I was in CAPA-alpha . . . when **Neal Pozner** died, jeez, what a shock!

CHARLES: *Wasn't it!*



DON: He and I were in CAPA-alpha together.

CHARLES: *I was in K-a with Neal.*

DON: And I am smack in the middle, between his age and **Don Thompson's**. Makes you think.

Anyway, I've always been involved with comics, but *professionally,* I didn't start doing comics for money, except for a little wheeling and dealing, until the early 1980s, with COMICS REVUE. **Rick Norwood** and I had been talking about various projects of that sort — maybe a line of one-character quarterlies, or maybe something like what COMICS REVUE turned out to be, or maybe a tabloid, with a color section for the Sunday strips. Right about then, **Don Chin** was putting out COMICS REVIEW with gag strips, just filling it with gag-a-day stuff. And he was getting out of it, so we took over with #4 and turned it into what it is now. We filled it with story strips. We changed the title with #12. Gradually, it became more reprint and less new strips. At this point, we're doing probably a little more than 50% reprint.

You know, we recently had our 100th issue. This is only the second time an independent comic has done that.

CHARLES: *Really?*

DON: Yes. As a matter of fact, it should

"The *best* way to do a book — make one you want, yourself."

Here are covers of a few recent issues of COMICS REVUE, which Don edits.

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be shipping even as we speak. By "recently had," I mean it recently went off of *my* drawing board. *(Laughter.)*

CHARLES: *What is your total involvement with COMICS REVUE?*

DON: I decide on the story breaks, for one thing. The stuff comes from the syndicates, so I don't have much say about that. I have a little more latitude with choosing the reprinted stuff, in conjunction with Rick. I decide on the cover. I do all the production work, cover and interior. I write, edit and typeset the letter column, the review column, this and that. Write and typeset the editorial.

The division of labor is, Rick handles the business end and I put out the magazine. I take it from what the syndicate sends me to camera-ready pages.

That's basically what I did with the HOT TIPS book. I took this big stack of COMICS INTERVIEW magazines, #1-#132, and my wife, GiGi, and I — she's listed as assistant editor — we went through the whole stack of issues, got the best stuff out of there that can help a guy get into the industry — "guy" of either gender, of course. Stuff that once you're in, can help you manage your career — tricks of the trade, what kind of tools the pros use — *anything* that can be construed as advice to anyone who needs advice on comic-book professionalism.

So we pulled it all out and had this mass of data, I mean this *mass* of data, and we boiled it down to a 90,000-word book — between 85,000 and 90,000 that is. I think it's just a *terrific* book. I mean, if I'd had a book like that myself . . . ah. You know, that's the *best* way to do a book — to make a book that you want to see, yourself.

CHARLES: *Is there any new material?*

DON: I wrote an introduction for it, and gave a couple of pieces of advice there, but the body of the book, aside from an occasional explanatory paragraph of my own — you know, **David Anthony Kraft** has always said COMICS INTERVIEW contains everything you need to know about making comics. I guess pulling it all out and putting it in book form proves that.

You know what else would make a great book? Anecdotes — behind-the-scenes stuff. I ran across dozens — *hundreds* of great stories about comics pros, and I couldn't put them in the book because they weren't tips. Maybe next year.

You know, it seems like I ought to provide stuff for the next edition — put a couple of tips into my own interview.

CHARLES: *Do you have any tips for us, Don?*

"There's a whole chapter on breaking in."

DON: Here is a tip. I learned this while writing funny animal comics — in particular, EEK! THE CAT for Hamilton Comics. There is a pair of analogous things that can go wrong with a script-in-progress. Things can be moving too slow, or they can be moving too fast. Too slow would be you're running through a pile of exposition, and it's been talking heads for most of a page, and you've got more exposition to plow through, and you think jeez, this is really bogging down. Too fast would be you're running through the plot, which has been approved by the licensor and has gone through *far* too many stages of approval to think about changing at this point, and you're not getting enough script out of it, and you're in danger of falling short of the number of pages the story is slotted for.

The solution to moving too slow is — bat 'em around.

CHARLES: *Right.*

DON: Toon violence can be stuck in just about anywhere, and a little slapstick really livens things up.

The solution to moving too fast is — bat 'em around. Toon violence can be stuck in just about anywhere, and a little slapstick really chews up the pages. And y'know what?

CHARLES: *What?*

DON: This works for superheroes, too. *(Laughter.)*

CHARLES: *Are you familiar with Jay Lynch?*

DON: I am quite familiar with **Jay Lynch.** I was hitting 21 just as the underground comics were starting.

CHARLES: *Then you're in for a treat. Jay Lynch is drawing our DUCKMAN comic book.*

DON: You're kidding! Ooh! Ooh!

CHARLES: *He's been working for Topps, on numerous trading card projects, for years and years. So when he heard we had the DUCKMAN property, he asked for it.*

DON: Oh, man, that's great!

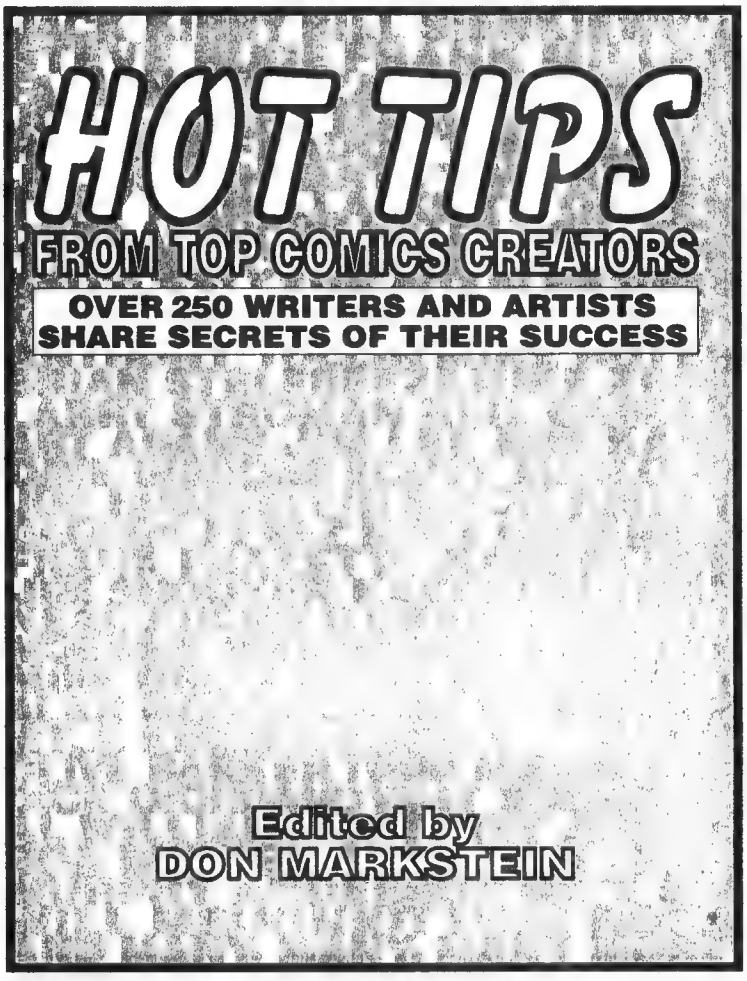
CHARLES: *And the writer is Stephan Petrucha.*

DON: Well, when he misses a deadline, give me a call. *(Laughter.)* So, is this a regular monthly series?

CHARLES: *It's a three-issue limited series,* and *a monthly. Jay is just doing the three-issue limited series.*

Anyway, we were talking about funny animals. That's what made me think of this. Getting back to HOT TIPS FROM TOP COMICS CREATORS, who do you see as the audience for the book? Who is the book geared for? Somebody trying to get into comics?

This is the book Don recently edited. It contains the best tips from past issues of this magazine, all in one place.



DON: It works for that. I would say, if you're a 25-year professional, you probably won't need this book. Most other people in comics do.

CHARLES: *If you're a 25-year professional, you're probably* in *this book.*

DON: Very likely, you are. There are quite a few 25-year professionals in it. But there's a whole chapter on breaking in. I didn't really concentrate too much on exactly how individuals broke in, unless it qualified as a tip — something others could use to improve their own chances.

Let me tell you how I broke into the business.

CHARLES: *Okay.*

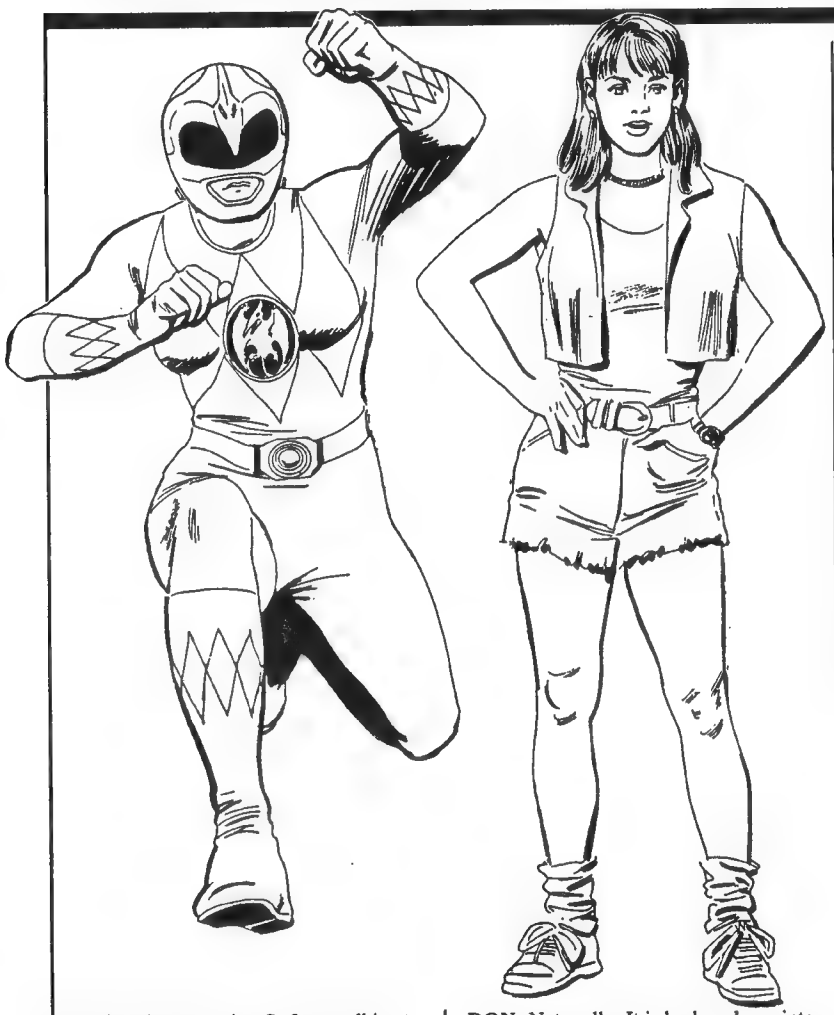
DON: Now, this is something that would just not work for other people. Are you familiar with a character called Bucky Bug?

CHARLES: *Uh, not really.*

DON: Nobody is. *(Laughter.)* The last Bucky Bug story appeared in 1950. It ran in WALT DISNEY'S COMICS & STORIES #38, #39 or so, to #120. And the thing about the Bucky Bug stories — he'd be just an ordinary defunct funny animal now, except that the stories are told in rhyme. It's not, like, little couplets at the bottoms of panels. It's in word balloons, captions, sound effects, but it all has meter and rhyme. Now, I vaguely recall something along the lines of Bucky Bug from when I was a kid, maybe a reprint or a stray story in an annual. But when I was 20, I started collecting WALT'S really seriously, and that's when I became familiar with the character. It didn't impress me until I started reading these comics *to kids.* And when I read Bucky Bug, the effect was just *electric.* You can *feel* the energy level of the room go up. The kids were really responding. So I came to appreciate Bucky Bug that way.

In 1990, I was writing for the AMAZING HEROES PREVIEW SPECIAL, do-

"I sat down and wrote a Bucky Bug script in perfect



ing the Disney entries. So I was talking to Disney editor **Bob Foster** on the phone, and it came out in the course of the conversation that he is also a Bucky Bug fan. Well, I sat down and wrote a Bucky Bug script in perfect meter and rhyme, sent it off, and he bought it. That was my first comics sale — first script I ever wrote, first time I sent it out.

From there, I had something to push, to give myself a little credibility in dealing with other editors.

CHARLES: *That really helps.*

DON: Anyway, in the HOT TIPS book, we do have stories of people breaking in, *if* they're applicable generally. Mine, obviously, is not applicable to most people. Most people find it more difficult to write meter and rhyme than I do — by the way, I write sonnets to order. Just give me a name and physical description, pet name, words and phrases you want used — and $50. *(Laughter.)*

CHARLES: *Right. Now, is this book broken down into tips for writers, tips for artists, etc.?*

DON: Not really. It is broken down into different categories, different stages, such as the guy who's never sent in anything before, the guy who's solidly in the industry but is always trying to improve his craft, and the guy who's made a couple of sales and is saying, "What now?"

CHARLES: *Uh huh. That's important. What happens is that a lot of people — not just in comics, but in the record industry, any creative work, whatever it is — they sell a thing and think aha, I'm in, this is it —*

DON: Little do they know! Little do they know!

Breaking in is a big milestone. But it's not the end of the road. I'll tell you, though, selling a first story makes it easier to sell a second.

My second was a horror story. I had this horrible, horrible monster, and he needed some real chillbumpy dialogue. I tried it several times, and it just seemed silly —

CHARLES: *Was this for Hamilton's short-lived horror comics? Oversized black-and-white —*

DON: That's right. I had a story in MAGGOTS-I-did-not-choose-the-title #2. So I had this monster that I had to write dialogue for, and nothing sounded right. It all sounded just *dumb,* until I had the bright idea of having him talk in rhyme.

CHARLES: *Really?*

DON: Yup. And for sentimental reasons, I chose the same four-beat iambic verse Bucky Bug uses. *(Laughter.)* Funny, this can be so cute when Bucky Bug does it, but when it's done by a disgusting, drooling thing that eats live dogs *(Laughter)* it's not so cute!

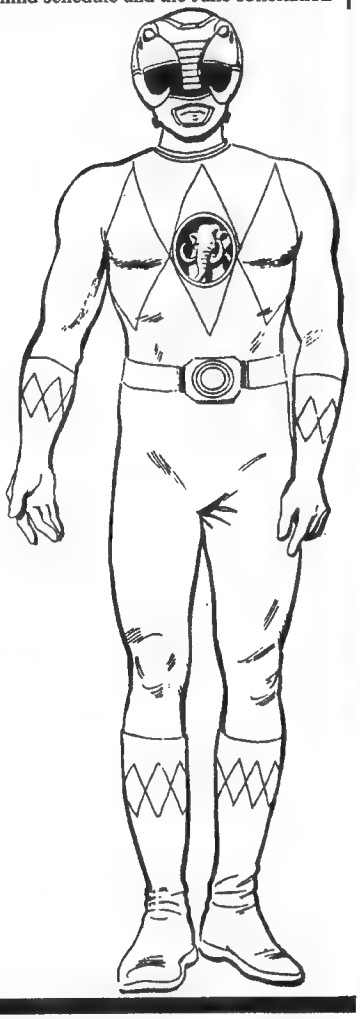
You know, I'm writing for Hamilton regularly now.

CHARLES: *What are you writing now?*

DON: MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS.

CHARLES: *They were having some problems with the license, weren't they?*

DON: Nothing serious, I gather. What happened was, they had a hard time getting stuff approved, so the project fell behind schedule and the June solicitation



meter and rhyme . . . by the way, I write sonnets to order."

had to be cancelled. And of course, everybody thinks, aw gee, too bad it fell through, but it didn't fall through — they just had to work it out. I don't really know what the difficulty was, but we seem to be past it.

I had three plots in at that time. The way the plots went was, I watched the show for a week and thought okay, I've got the formula down pat, and I wrote a plot to their formula. Then I watched it for another week and thought maybe I could play with the formula a little. So I wrote a slightly off-formula plot. Then I watched it for another week or two and thought, let's get away from the formula. So I wrote this off-the-wall plot that really didn't have much to do with the formula.

Now, I don't know how many writers were submitting stuff. I know personally of three or four. But of all the stories submitted by all the writers, guess which *one* plot they liked. *(Laughter.)*

But for the one that deviated from the formula only a little, they went so far as to suggest changes that might bring it in line.

MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS TM & Copyright ©1994 Saban Entertainment, Inc. & Saban International N.V. All Rights Reserved.

Don has written scripts for Hamilton Comics' MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS. The first issue will be drawn by Gray Morrow. Here and next page, three of Morrow's POWER RANGERS model sheets.

Once I saw what they wanted, I submitted a fourth plot, and it flew. That'll be in #2. I think I have the hang of it now. I stick to what's on TV — I was given some material fleshing out the characters for the comic-book version, but I've found it best to ignore that.

And I have no problem with sticking to what's on TV. That's what got them in every toy store in America and on the cover of TV GUIDE.

CHARLES: *Do you anticipate success for the comic?*

DON: I anticipate *mega*-success. I think this is one of those things that will catch retailers flat-footed. They just don't realize how big this Power Rangers thing is.

Anyway, I'm sticking to what I see on TV, and it really is working out quite well, You know, when you're doing a licensed product, you should get into it.

CHARLES: *I'm editing the DUCKMAN titles, and I've seen every episode — there are 13 so far — several times.*

DON: I watch POWER RANGERS every single day — not for the scintillating adventure, but just because that's how you get the characters' voice inflections down, that's how you get their little gestures down — you know, if you can hear the actors' voices in your head as you write, you know you're doing it right.

Just this morning, I was looking at a little exchange that I've seen a couple of times between a couple of characters, thinking that's a good one. I'll be using that one somewhere.

Watching the show every day really pays off. Another tip.

CHARLES: *The first issue's not out yet, is it?*

DON: It ships in November. I've now scripted #1 and #2, and I've got a plot out for #3. I should know whether that one will fly by about Friday or so. And I just sent off what I hope is the plot for #4.

CHARLES: *So you're doing it full-script, then?*

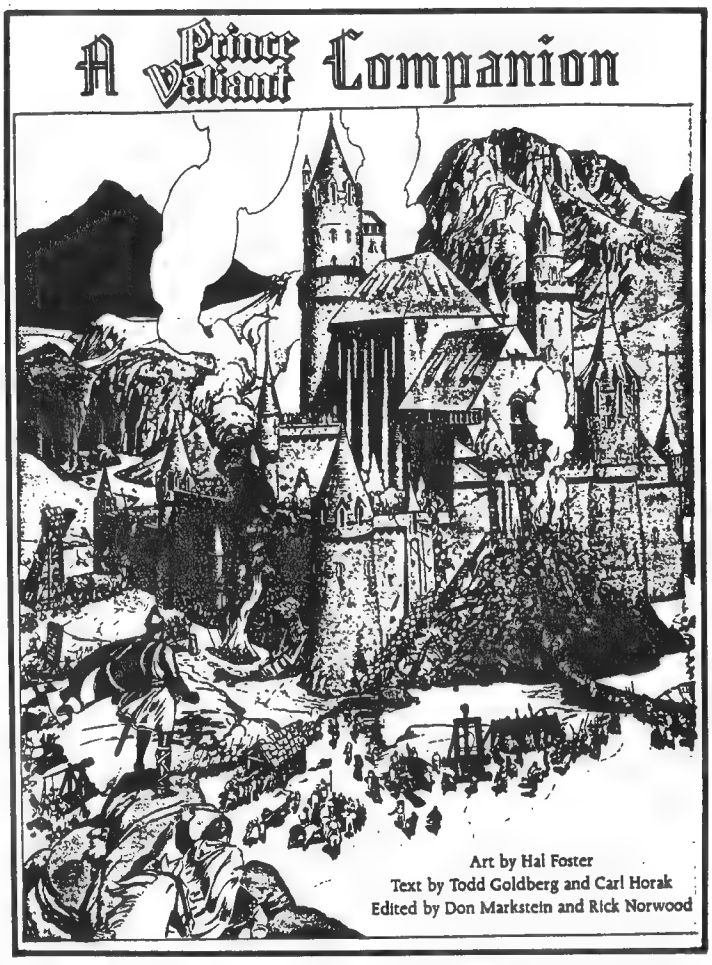
DON: Yes.

CHARLES: *I find that's probably the best way to handle a licensed property, because there's one less step. You don't*

Licensing: "Phantom editors, who know *nothing* about comics."

PRINCE VALIANT TM & ©1994 King Features Syndicate.

Don also edited this book, which was published in 1992 by Manuscript Press.


A Prince Valiant Companion
Art by Hal Foster
Text by Todd Goldberg and Carl Horak
Edited by Don Markstein and Rick Norwood

have to approve a plot and then approve the dialogue.

DON: Actually, no, we're going through a plot. They approve a plot, then I write the script, then it goes to the artist. One more stage of approval, but less invested if you have to throw it out.

CHARLES: *Then you're not doing an entire issue, Marvel-style?*

DON: No. It's like I said in the HOT TIPS book: it's like having these phantom editors, with the temperament of an artist and the soul of a corporation, and they know nothing — *nothing* about comics.

CHARLES: *So, how is it, working on a high-profile property like POWER RANGERS?*

DON: I'm tellin' ya, Charlie, it's made me a big celebrity in this neighborhood. My 10-year-old tells strangers in the supermarket that her daddy writes POWER RANGERS comic books. *(Laughter.)*

CHARLES: *While we're on this subject, you might want to plug the rest of the creative team on the book.*

DON: Gray Morrow!

CHARLES: *Oh!*

DON: Can you dig it?

CHARLES: *Wow!*

DON: I believe he's inking himself. I don't know who the letterer and colorist are. But I've been looking at Gladstone's coloring lately, and it is terrific.

CHARLES: *Who is doing their coloring? Is it being done via computer?*

DON: Yes, I believe **Susan Daigle-Leach** is doing most of their coloring, and I *believe* she's using a computer. It certainly has the look of a computerized type of operation.

You know — let me give you a little editorial, here — some people who don't know computers very well think in terms of computers doing lettering and computers doing coloring. But of course, *people* do lettering and coloring, using computers as tools. This is human lettering and human coloring — it's just that use of the computer allows whole new vistas of creativity.

Do you know how we did the cover of the HOT TIPS book? This is really neat.

CHARLES: *What is the cover? Tell us.*

DON: My mandate on the cover was, do something eye-catching with type. You know, I got into COMICS INTERVIEW first by setting their type — I've been running a typesetting business for years. I probably would not have edited this book if I were not also setting the type. It happens to be *very convenient* to go straight from my edited work into camera-ready pages.

Anyway, what I did for the cover was to take about 60 or so names of people quoted, make them real bold and scrunch them real close together until I had a kind of abstract-looking wallpaper where you'd simply get this effect of names, names, names. Then I screened it real light and laid a big, bold title on top of it. DAK says, "real nice, but can you do it in color?" *(Laughter.)*

My usual expression for the point in time we were at is "The printer is tapping his foot." This time, he was screaming and tearing out his hair. *(Laughter.)* There was just no *possible way* to get it separated. Now, I can sit and color it all you want, but if you can't get seps . . .

It turned out to be real easy. I had never done this before — I only upgraded to my present computer two years ago, and I'm still exploring. It still has *fathoms* of depth that I may never *live* long enough to explore. But I found, buried in the printer options, that I could just click the mouse and have it spit out seps — *two hours* later, as it turned out. *(Laughter.)*

CHARLES: *It took two hours to print?*

DON: Yeah. So I made all the names different colors, and made the title red and yellow, and let's throw some effects in here, y'know. Well, DAK edited out the effects, and he was right — it was already busy enough. Next day, the printer had the seps.

It did not come out looking exactly as it had on my screen, of course. When you see a copy, **Bob Burden's** name is supposed to be carrot-colored.

CHARLES: *Okay, fair enough.*

DON: It came out kind of pinkish. And a lot of adjacent names are a little closer in color than I expected them to be. Some of the yellow had to be dropped out of the title at the color-key stage, because some of the yellows *around* it turned out to be hotter than expected. But, that's what

"I decided on a page layout, and poured the text in."

happens when you switch from a back-lit computer screen to flat paper. And I'd never done this before.

But it gives me a good point of reference. The second time the cover goes to press it'll look even better.

CHARLES: *Then you're typesetting and editing and writing and all these things — this book has to be a real experience for you! And a learning experience.*

DON: Oh, yes — in many ways, it was. Now, I had previously done the same thing on another book — took it from raw material to camera-ready pages. Are you familiar with A PRINCE VALIANT COMPANION?

CHARLES: *Oh, sure!*

DON: It's a smaller book, in page count, but I would not necessarily say it was a smaller project, both because it took some pretty specialized knowledge and because the pages are larger, with more complex layouts. With HOT TIPS, I basically decided on a page layout, and just poured the text in.

I love that expression! I took the stuff from my word processor, and I *poured* it into the pages. I love my computer!

CHARLES: *What type of computer is it?*

DON: A 386DX-40. That was hot shit when I got it, but now it's starting to look kind of dowdy. But that's okay, because when I do upgrade to a 486 or dare I say it, a Pentium, there are family members who will inherit it. Soon as I have a good mother board, I have enough spare parts to build a word processor for my wife. She's still using CP/M. Then the kids can have the old CP/M machine to use as their word processor until we upgrade again.

You know, this recent shift from production to the creative and editorial corners isn't new for me. I've been a professional writer for 25 years — not in comics — but I've always had a foot on each side. I'm the "compleat journalist." For years, I've been more in production because — it's like **Erik Larsen** and the whole "Name Withheld" debate in CBG, not that there's any connection at all between the two . . .

CHARLES: *Of course not!* (Laughter.)

DON: It's like Name Withheld, y'know, people *all* think they're writers. So writers don't get paid what they're worth — sometimes don't get paid at all. But people always pay the production guys, because they have no illusions about being able to do what we do.

I can even run a small press. The compleat journalist.

CHARLES: *Do you find that a background in production helps you write?*

DON: Maybe so, in comics, yeah, maybe so. I'm really a lot closer to the whole process, and I can see more where it's going, what it's going to look like. We're doing these things full-script, which means that I kind of have to see it in my head as I'm doing it, and sometimes what I see in my head is a little blurry and the artist is sitting there going, "What in the hell is this?" or "What can I possibly do to save this thing?" *(Laughter.)*

CHARLES: *What other projects do you have going on?*

DON: I have another book project that I don't want to talk about here because nothing is signed and the publisher is balking. I do have another possible publisher if they don't go for it, but it's all chicken-counting. I've got lots of things in various stages of negotiation, but nothing is signed, and if I talk about it it's not going to happen.

One thing I think I can mention is a funny animal, Hank O'Hare, which I'm doing with **Richie Prosch.** He and his wife, Gina, do "Emma Davenport" in CBG.

CHARLES: *How do you see the industry right now?*

DON: Well, if we can get through this Capital City Distribution business . . . Sooner or later, they'll come to their senses, or something will happen. This situation cannot last. The climate of fear among small publishers simply can't go on. This business where people are *afraid* to solicit anything because distributors might not want to buy enough copies to justify printing it — how can we possibly continue to have that? I mean — in every other industry in the world, you solicit something, nobody wants to buy it, you just *don't produce it,* and nothing awful happens to you. Here, now, a simple business move like that could sink you.

CHARLES: *Right.*

DON: The amazing thing is that COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE isn't flooded with letters on the subject. The industry is *buzzing* about this, and CBG hasn't mentioned it in months.

CHARLES: *Yes, the previous issue of COMICS INTERVIEW is all about this.*

DON: That's right. By the way, I did the color on that cover same way I colored the cover of HOT TIPS. That was my *second* coloring job. *(Laughter.)*

CHARLES: *With your computer?*

DON: Right. You know, typesetting COMICS INTERVIEW gives me a unique collectible. I have all of the interviews of the last five years in machine-readable form. And I'm not turning loose of copies!

CHARLES: *I just got a new computer.*

DON: IBM-compatible?

CHARLES: *Oh, yes.*

DON: Color monitor?

CHARLES: *Oh, yes.*

DON: Do you have a copy of my —

CHARLES: *Yes, I do. And I've given them to everybody I can think of.*

DON: For the benefit of the readers — If you are IBM-compatible and have a color monitor, you may be familiar with a shareware version of Mah-Jongg by **Nels Anderson.** Distributed with it is a program for making your own tile sets — you can be looking at any set of pictures you like, instead of standard mah-jongg tiles. I put together a complete tile set based on comic-book covers.

CHARLES: *And it's fabulous!*

DON: Thank you.

CHARLES: *I've distributed it in the Marvel offices, and in the Topps offices.*

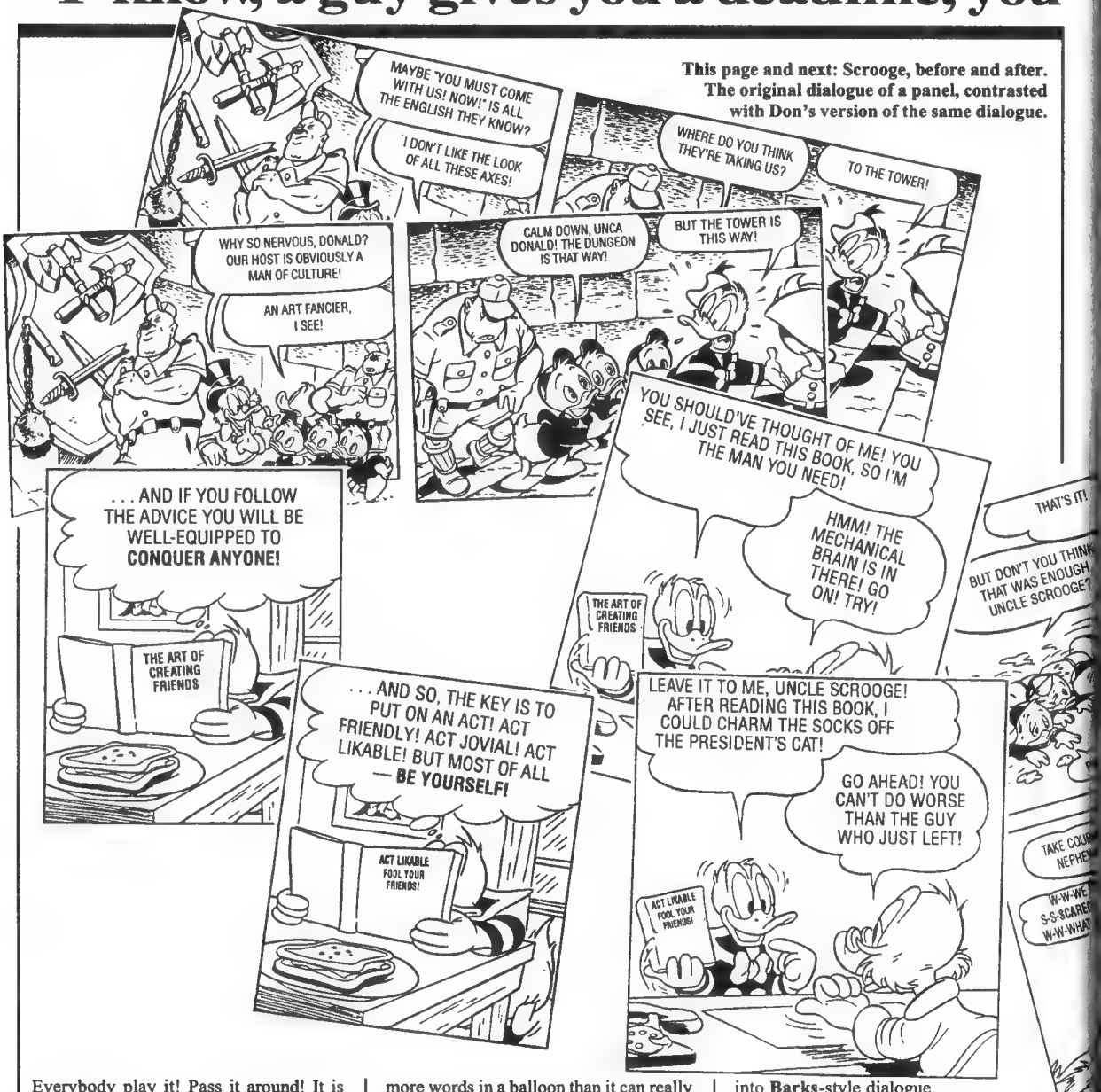
DON: Great! Thanks! The more places you put your name — this is a tip, for beginners, breaking in — the more places you put your name, the better chance there is that an editor, seeing your submission, will think your name sounds familiar and will take the submission just a teeny bit more seriously.

My name is on the bottom of that screen.

Don as Groo the Wanderer (complete with cheese dip can scrounged from the hotel coffee shop) at a 1982 con.

"Y'know, a guy gives you a deadline, you

This page and next: Scrooge, before and after. The original dialogue of a panel, contrasted with Don's version of the same dialogue.


MAYBE "YOU MUST COME WITH US! NOW!" IS ALL THE ENGLISH THEY KNOW?
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF ALL THESE AXES!
WHERE DO YOU THINK THEY'RE TAKING US?
TO THE TOWER!
WHY SO NERVOUS, DONALD? OUR HOST IS OBVIOUSLY A MAN OF CULTURE!
AN ART FANCIER, I SEE!
CALM DOWN, UNCA DONALD! THE DUNGEON IS THAT WAY!
BUT THE TOWER IS THIS WAY!
YOU SHOULD'VE THOUGHT OF ME! YOU SEE, I JUST READ THIS BOOK, SO I'M THE MAN YOU NEED!
HMM! THE MECHANICAL BRAIN IS IN THERE! GO ON! TRY!
. . . AND IF YOU FOLLOW THE ADVICE YOU WILL BE WELL-EQUIPPED TO CONQUER ANYONE!
THE ART OF CREATING FRIENDS
. . . AND SO, THE KEY IS TO PUT ON AN ACT! ACT FRIENDLY! ACT JOVIAL! ACT LIKABLE! BUT MOST OF ALL — BE YOURSELF!
ACT LIKABLE FOOL YOUR FRIENDS!
LEAVE IT TO ME, UNCLE SCROOGE! AFTER READING THIS BOOK, I COULD CHARM THE SOCKS OFF THE PRESIDENT'S CAT!
GO AHEAD! YOU CAN'T DO WORSE THAN THE GUY WHO JUST LEFT!
THAT'S IT!
BUT DON'T YOU THINK THAT WAS ENOUGH, UNCLE SCROOGE?

Everybody play it! Pass it around! It is available free, as an accessory to the shareware game. Write to me at Etienne's Type Shop, 14836 N. 35th St., Phoenix, AZ 85032. Send me either size disk and return postage, and I'll put a copy on it and send it back.

CHARLES: *My tip is that no matter who you're submitting to, what kind of material it is, whether you're getting paid for it or not — never submit anything less than your best work. You never know who's going to give you your next job.*

DON: Absolutely. You are so right. And here's another tip — I discovered this one last week. I set my word processor to show the type at 18-point. I'm wordy — everybody is wordy. We all want to put more words in a balloon than it can really hold. Now, what I write *looks* bigger, so I find it easier to write less.

CHARLES: *There you go!*

DON: And it works! I'm fooling myself, and I know I'm fooling myself — but I still fall for it.

Oh, I wanted to mention another thing I'm doing for Gladstone. This is really fun — rewriting European Uncle Scrooge stories for an American audience. These things — many of them are written in English by people who aren't all that good at English, or who don't care because whatever they write is going to be translated into a dozen different languages anyway. Well, I've been reading **Carl Barks** for 40 years, and basically, I turn it into **Barks**-style dialogue.

You know, it's really amazing how Uncle Scrooge just *sounds* like Uncle Scrooge! I did a Mickey Mouse story, and I could not write the same great dialogue for the Mouse that I could for Scrooge. Uncle Scrooge uses great word patterns, and Mickey Mouse doesn't.

CHARLES: *You know, it was my idea to put a Carl Barks cover on DUCKMAN #1. But I don't know how to approach him.*

DON: Don't be shy!

CHARLES: *I don't even know how to get in touch with the guy.*

DON: I have his studio in my Rolodex. I'll get it for you when we finish.

CHARLES: *The comic is coming out in*

hit it. That's how you keep getting work."

November. That's a real tight deadline. I don't know if we could promise a Carl Barks cover.

DON: Then don't promise. Just spring it on people. You know, I had to hit a really tight deadline for POWER RANGERS #1. The book had already been cancelled for its June ship date, and by the time a plot was approved we were looking at November. But even for that, I had to have the script on editor **John Clark's** desk one week after it was approved. Bam bam bam, four days later I dropped a 26-page script in the mailbox.

CHARLES: *Good.*

DON: Well, y'know, a guy gives you a deadline, you hit it. That's how you keep getting work.

CHARLES: *That's right. Remember those nightmare deadlines on COMICS INTERVIEW #100?*

DON: Oh, God! My favorite incident from that was when I was on the phone with DAK and he gets another call and says "Hold on, I'll be right back." He's back, like, instantaneously, saying "What's this I hear about Disney Comics folding?" I put him on hold, called **John Clark** in Prescott, found that they weren't quite folding but had cut back drastically . . . *(Laughter.)* I don't know how many times we were crisscrossing the country with this one conversation.

And of course, that meant a complete remake of the "100 Most Powerful People in Comics" feature.

CHARLES: *And it had to be re-done again when Carol Kalish died.*

DON: Yes. Another shocker. Another one from our days in CAPA-alpha. *Man,* what a shock that was!

I haven't gotten used to **Neal Pozner** being dead. You know, a couple of years ago, I sent him a proposal at DC. In the cover letter, I said, "Hi! Remember me from CAPA-alpha? Yeah? Well, look, man — that was 20 years ago, okay?" *(Laughter.)*

He wrote back that sure, he remembered me — I was one of the guys who turned him on to **Carl Barks.**

CHARLES: *Wow!*

DON: How 'bout that! Isn't that a great thing to be remembered for?

ABSOLUTELY! WE ONLY HAVE TO SCALE THAT CLIFF!
OH, NO!
PANT!
THEN IT'S A GOOD THING ALL YOU HAVE TO DO NOW IS CLIMB!
CLIMB THAT?! WHY DON'T WE JUST BUILD AN ELEVATOR?
DON'T THINK ABOUT IT, THEN!
HMPH! SAVE YOUR BREATH FOR CLIMBING!
STRENUOUS WORK FOR 30 CENTS AN HOUR!
YES, BUT TELL US AGAIN! MAYBE WE CAN FLOAT UP ON YOUR HOT AIR!
EVER HEAR ABOUT THE CLIFFS I CLIMBED SELLING VICUNA BLANKETS IN THE ANDES?
JUST ONE MORE LITTLE OBSTACLE . . .
WEAKLINGS! I SCALED STEEPER GRADES SELLING SOD FOR THE LEVEES OF INDIANA!
YES, BUT THERE THE SLOPE WAS UNDER YOU!
DON'T LOOK DOWN!
HERE WE ARE! WITH PLENTY OF ENERGY LEFT OVER — AS YOU CAN SEE!
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF!
YEAH! SOME OF US ARE STILL CLIMBING!

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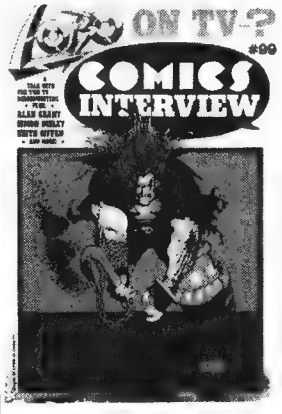

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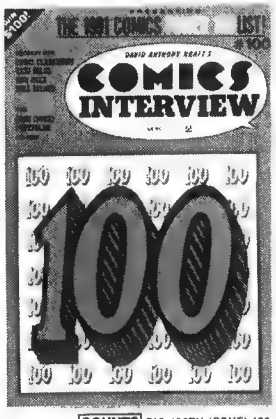

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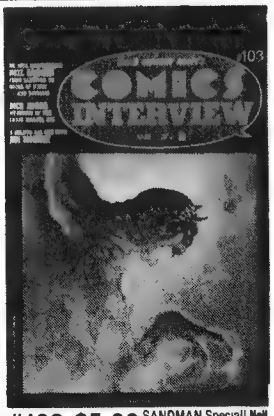

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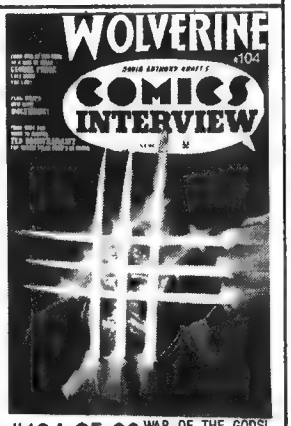

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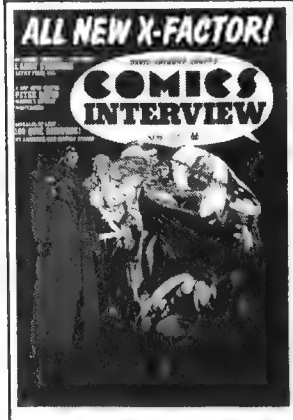

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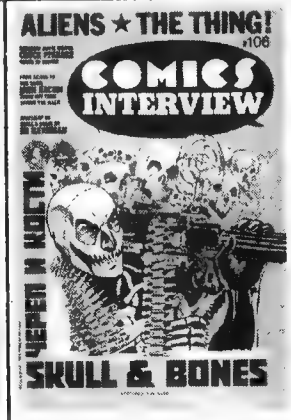

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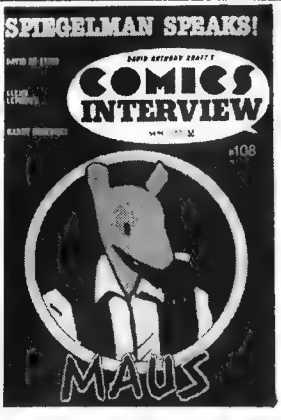

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"The path of least resistance. I don't want that a[illegible]"

DAN ADKINS

In Part One, Dan spoke at length about his early days in comics, and cited some of the many earlier artists whose work gave inspiration to his own. Here, he continues to reminisce about his lengthy involvement in the comics industry and the broad diversity of sources on which his Creative Muse has drawn . . .

LOU MOUGIN: Did you guys write the adaptation of FANTASTIC VOYAGE?

DAN ADKINS: They sent a full script. I left Wally to go off on my own because I could see that — he was warning me things would slow down and there were problems selling the books and stuff — so I quit without warning him. I'd already done a story for Warren, CREEPY or EERIE.

LOU: *Yes, I remember those fantastic black-and-whites you did for Warren. I especially think of the splash page from "The Day After Doomsday" where the guy comes out to see the devastation.*

DAN: Yeah, he crawls through the tunnel there in the prologue, then comes out to see the rubble. So anyway, I was wanting to work for CREEPY because that's where all the good artists were working. I

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Dan Adkins
Born: 15 March 1937 — Midkiff, West Virginia
Wife: Jeanette — married 1959
Children: Chris — born 1965
Personal Distinctions: I'm a prude. I don't like violence, all this killing. Nudity. Anybody that thinks it doesn't reflect on society is nuts.
Best Buddy: Steranko. We have a lot of fun together.
Favorite Piece of Work: Let's put it this way. The most pleasure I had was inking John Buscema on SILVER SURFER, SUB-MARINER, or anything. Probably my *proudest* job is that one Barry Smith CONAN, "The Hounds of Vengeance."

"The Day After Doomsday", "The Wanderer", "I, That Lurks", "The Doorway", TM & ©1980-87 Warren Publications / Iron Man, Invisible Girl, Captain America, The Thing, Spider-Man, Thor, Nick Fury, Sub-Mariner, Ant-Man and the Human Torch ©1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. / Conan TM & ©1994 Conan Properties, Inc. / All other illustrations ©1994 Dan Adkins.

"'The Day after Doomsday' spread. It's done in brush."

was always asking **Archie Goodwin**—it took about six months of *begging* Archie before he finally gave me something. The first thing he gave me was a one-pager in BLAZING COMBAT, about airplanes or something. And then there was "The Doorway," my first assignment, and I did that in zip-a-tone and it was very similar to Wally's style. Then the second one was the dinosaur story,which I did in wash, and that began to look a little less like Wally and a little more like **Williamson** and **Frazetta.** That's the one at the end where the guy goes down in the water and there's a girl standing there; her ass is made out of rubber. *(Laughter.)* that's what Archie said: "That girl's ass looks like it's made out of rubber."

Then the third story there was "The Day After Doomsday." There on the last panel the girl is wearing high heels. Archie says, "What are you doing? She should have low shoes!" It didn't fit the story. The last scene with the cannibals or whatever, that's from a painting of people killing **Caesar.** That was the reference on that. And "The Day After Doomsday" spread, that whole job is done in brush. Everybody thinks it was like an engraving with pens and such, but there's no penwork in "Day After Doomsday." It's all brush. All that woodwork on that splash page, that's done freehand; it's drawn with a ruler in pencil, but it's done freehand with a brush in ink, so it doesn't look quite as stiff, you know. It looks soft.

LOU: *It looks so real.*

DAN: Yeah, and that was back in the days when we used to work a full 100% up instead of 50% up. That's from a photograph in NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, a war scene looking through a church window, and I enlarged the hole in the wall. So, they got one letter about it and I got bawled out for using a swipe.

LOU: *You also ended up painting some covers. I'm looking at EERIE #9 right here.*

DAN: Which one is that?

LOU: *It's the one for "The Wanderer," the guy—*

DAN: Yeah, that guy floating down is from a **Virgil Finlay** black-and-white drawing. And the little monsters coming up are from a **Kossin** drawing of people. It was people trying to grab somebody.

LOU: *Another one I'm looking at which I thought was an excellent job is "It!"—the space story.*

DAN: Yeah, that was in the year 20,000 or something. That was bound to . . . I used some swipes and I had to make some of it up, because there's only so many shots of that animal, but that was like an

"You learn by swiping from Foster for awhile."

Archie Goodwin's "The Day After Doomsday!" by Dan — EERIE #8 (March, 1967)

OH, MY GOD!
ADKINS
RICHARD CALDWELL HAD SURVIVED. HE HAD NO CONCEPT OF HOW LONG HE HAD BEEN UNDERGROUND. PERHAPS DAYS, PERHAPS MONTHS, PERHAPS YEARS...THINGS HAD STARTED TO GO WRONG IN THE SHELTER, GENERATORS HAD FAILED, EQUIPMENT HAD BROKEN DOWN...TIME HAD SLIPPED FROM HIS GRASP, NOTHING WENT AS PLANNED. HE HAD BEGUN TO DIG, AND ENDED BY CLAWING... BUT HE HAD SURVIVED!

homage to the movie.

LOU: *Another one I think everyone will remember is "Overworked," the one you did with Wally that appeared in CREEPY.*

DAN: Yeah, that's my pencilling and Wally's and my inking.

LOU: *Was Wally the model for the artist?*

DAN: Yeah. *(Laughter.)* The thing there was that was an attempt, at Archie's suggestion, of doing **Wally Wood's** "My World" again.

LOU: *Right, from the old ECs.*

DAN: A lot of that stuff in the first splash there is made up — you learn to do that easy by just swiping from **Foster** for awhile. And that's stuff I liked to do later on in DR. STRANGE, all that background stuff.

LOU: *So, it was right after this period that —*

DAN: Yeah, I started it in CREEPY, and I was still working for Wally, and I was still working for AMAZING and FANTASTIC and IF and GALAXY — I was working for *all* those people then. I told Wally I was going to do a painting for CREEPY or EERIE and he says, "Oh, you can't do a painting for them; they've

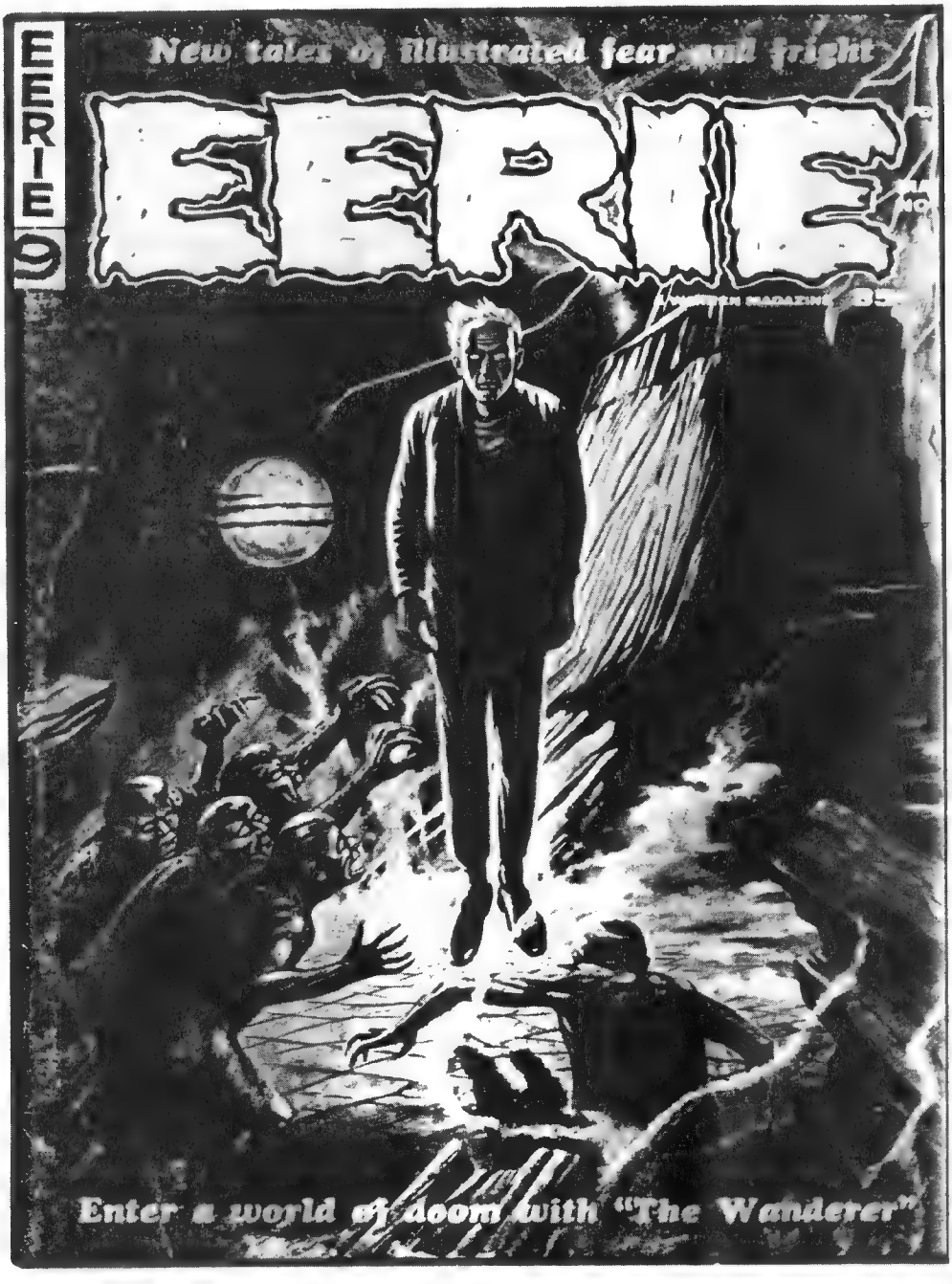
"I said I was going to do a painting, and did 'The

got **Morrow** and **Frazetta.**" I said I was going to do a painting, went and did "The Wanderer." I just did that ahead of time and then we wrote a story around it, so I had a lot of *guts* back then! *(Laughter.)* And working for AMAZING, I remember calling them up and telling them I could draw better than their artists. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *That's the way to get the work.*

DAN: Yeah. I've lost that now; I don't do that anymore. So anyway, I went up to Marvel and who I saw was **Sol Brodsky.** He took me into see Stan, and Stan and I sat down and worked out a plot, so I went home and did my first SUB-MARINER story. Actually, that was my second thing; the *first* thing I did was ink **Bill Everett** on SUB-MARINER. then I did the plot story, because we worked out the plot then **Sol Brodsky** brought in this other SUB-MARINER that was already pencilled and they wanted to see how I did on that. So, I did that, then **Stan Lee** wrote my first story that I pencilled. Then **Roy Thomas** took over and did the second. And there are swipes in there from **Jack Davis** and **Foster** and everything. It's like **Gulacy** says, I usually make up about 30% of it and swipe the rest. *(Laughter.)*

Dan's only cover painting for any of the various Warren magazines — again, for EERIE #8, "The Wanderer." Dan: "... That guy floating down is from a Virgil Finlay black & white drawing. And the little monsters coming up are from a Kossin drawing of people ..."



Wanderer. Then we wrote a story around it."

Dan in the midst of Marvel's mid-'70s magazine production staff, Lenny Grow, Barbara Altman and Nora Maclin.

LOU: *I remember your DR. STRANGE work. That's the stuff that really stands out in my mind from that period.*

DAN: Yeah, I took that M.D. cover for that. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *One of the images I remember from that was that green, mystic entity called Nebulous, the thing that just floats in on Doc and his girl.*

DAN: That was a piece of sculpture. *(Laughter.)* Yeah, that was a swipe from a paperback cover by **Schoenherr**, and the thing is I owned the original. It only cost me about $20 and now it's probably worth a fortune. So, I took the idea from his cover and changed it. There was a lot of stuff around by **Richard Powers** at that time, too. I had all his paintings and they *all* were weird sculptures. **Schoenherr** was using them, so I used them. You can make up a *lot* of stuff with DR. STRANGE, for the background, and I was *good* at *that* stuff.

LOU: *Realism seemed to help in that thing, too, because you had a realistic rendering of all that weird stuff.*

DAN: The thing is at the start they said to make it look like **Steve Ditko,** you know. So, I did eleven issues, and it goes from looking like **Steve Ditko** — with some swipes from **Steve Ditko** — and then it changes around to a much *blacker* style with more realistic rendering on the clothing and faces and stuff, so by the end it's almost a completely different style.

LOU: *You did also that origin story which was the first full-length story they did of Dr. Strange.*

DAN: Yeah, I pencilled and inked the first three books. We were on a monthly schedule, 22 to 24 pages, and it's kind of hard to pencil and ink that per month and still do science fiction drawings for IF and everything. So, after that . . . also, the fanzine press, a lot of people ain't honest about the swiping and how they feel and everything, but I was beginning to feel pretty guilty. And Wally did say I needed older references. *(Laughter.)* And Archie

"Craig Russell came out here on vacation,

did call me in once; I needed to take more careful swipes. so, there were all these great people to ink, like **John Buscema** and **Jack Kirby** and **Gene Colan**, so I decided to ink for awhile. Unfortunately, I stayed inking too long, I think. After **Don Newton** died I didn't get very good stuff to ink. They gave me stuff to fix up usually.

LOU: *But you did pencil and ink some SUB-MARINER stories in the early '70s, right?*

DAN: Yeah, that was the first stuff that I did.

LOU: *I mean in the 1970s.*

DAN: Oh, yeah, I did go back and do two more. One was inked by **Colletta,** which I *hated.* It wasn't his fault. He did some nice drawings on his own, but they gave him stuff where usually he had to ink like four or five pages a day. They put him in that hole and they wouldn't let him out; that's the only type of work they would give him, so he could *never* do good work that way.

LOU: *One thing I wanted to ask about, because they gave a one-page preview of it but it never showed up, STARHAWK. Tell me something about STARHAWK.*

DAN: I screwed that up. **Roy Thomas** wanted to give me something to do that fit the way I draw, and this was science fiction, but this was science fiction like 1984 and BRAVE NEW WORLD, you know. I tried to make it a little too serious, not enough action I guess, and Roy didn't like it. I did about 15 pages. I think three or four pages showed up in FOOM MAGAZINE.

LOU: *Okay, so you had been inking.*

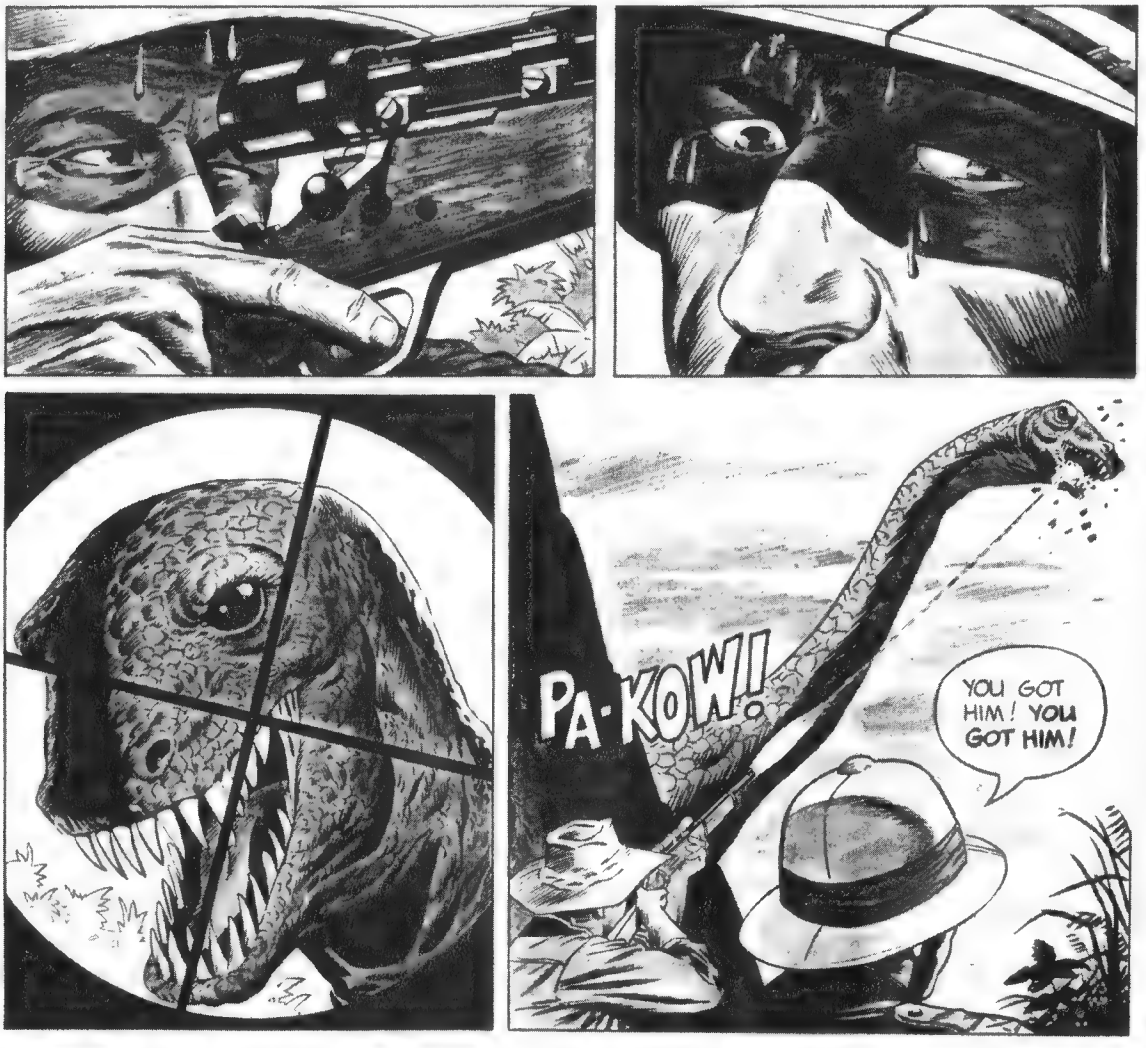
DAN: Yeah, SILVER SURFER and SUB-MARINER. **John Buscema** used to do *tight* pencils before he started doing breakdowns. And **Jack Kirby's** CAPTAIN AMERICA, I did two of those and there were a couple of panels in there that were inked by **Steranko** because Nick Fury was in the story. Then **Gene Colan** was doing IRON MAN. That was a pretty good book. **Frank Giacoia** should get a lot of credit for making **Gene Colan's** DAREDEVIL popular because he did some good inking there.

LOU: *Yeah, Frank was an excellent inker.*

DAN: He was a great guy. He had five daughters or something. Poor Frank is dead now.

LOU: *Let's see, on MASTER OF KUNG FU you ended up inking Gulacy.*

Goodwin's "It That Lurks!" by Adkins, from EERIE #8.



so I started teaching him at age 19."

DAN: Yeah, that was another whole thing there. I started this little group of guys over there in Ohio, out of boredom you know, so they ran a full-page article on me in the local paper. They came out and interviewed me. One of the people to notice it was **Craig Russell's** father. **Craig Russell** came out on vacation from Cincinnati University, so I started teaching him at 19, and the first stories he worked on were those little stories that appeared in the back of TOWER OF SHADOWS and things like that. I laid it out, something about a vampire in space or something. They wanted to kill him but they couldn't find any wood.

The next one was **Val Mayerik.** He knew a teacher in East Liverpool, where I lived then, and the teacher said he knew someone who was interested in comics. Val was working in a book store, so I told him to quit his job and I laid out a story for him, and **Joe Sinnott** inked it, so **Val Mayerik** started working for comics. Then **Val Mayerik** was on a bus going to Pittsburgh . . . his *girlfriend* was on a bus; she sat down next to **Paul Gulacy,** so **Paul Gulacy** started coming over. He did that . . . Morbius or whatever that character is.

LOU: *Yeah.*

DAN: Yeah. Then, when I was in New Jersey they sent **Jerry Bingham** over to my place, **Marie Severin** did. This was '72 and I was tired of Jersey, so I told him if he would drive me over to **Steranko's** in Redding, because I don't drive, I would make him a star. *(Laughter.)* so, we came over here, he went and got his furniture and stuff, and he lived downstairs here for several years. So, those are the four guys I helped get into comics — **Russell, Mayerik, Gulacy, Bingham.**

LOU: *One of the inking jobs you did that definitely impressed me was the one you did for José Garcia-Lopez on SUPERMAN/WONDER WOMAN.*

DAN: That was from breakdowns, and I don't think it was quite so good, and God, it took *forever*, those 72 pages. Some of **Giordano's** assistants helped do some of the backgrounds, and I *still* thought I'd *never* get through with that book! *(Laughter.)* It was also done the same size as it was printed.

LOU: *I'm sure that didn't make it any easier. So, now you're getting back a step at a time into comics?*

DAN: I'm not sure what I'm going to do. There was a thing that came out from BUYER'S GUIDE about the artists. They have my picture and I listed a bunch of books there that I had done. It came to 71 titles not counting the magazines I've

Various '70s collaborations between Dan and Russell.

"I went to get my last six teeth pulled. I take the

done covers for, and if you take the actual number of comics there's over 800 comics. There were six HULKs by **Herb Trimpe,** eight SILVER SURFERs — I can remember all the numbers! And God, I think 10% of them were late, too, and you always feel guilty when you're late. I don't want to ink anymore, *per se,* unless I get to ink people like **Barry Smith, Jim Lee** or somebody really good, you know.

LOU: *Mike Mignola.*

DAN: Yeah, I like **Mignola.** So, you know, after **Don Newton** — and no reflection on poor old **Dan Jurgens** — *(Laughter.)* But this was when he was first starting out. To give you an example of how bad this is, and what I'm wanting to *avoid*, is **Ross Andru** — bless his heart — was the editor of that book WARLORD that **Dan Jurgens** was doing, and he kept saying more texture, more this, in other words more from *me.* I went down to get my last six teeth pulled before getting false teeth. I stayed up all night and then all day and then all night, then got up at 11:00 and went to the dentist and got six teeth pulled, got on the bus to New York with the last pages, there's gauze on one side of my mouth and it takes three hours to get there, and I get there and **Ross Andru** looks at it and says, "More texture." *(Laughter.)* So, I take the gauze out. "Where do you want

"The Doorway!" by Goodwin & Adkins (from CREEPY #11, October, 1966).

THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME LEFT... MUST TALK QUICKLY... I'M CHARLES DAMON, SECURITY GUARD AT PROJECT ZEUS, TOP PRIORITY GOVERNMENT EXPERIMENTAL LAB... AT LEAST I WAS BEFORE THIS ALL BEGAN, BEFORE CORRIDOR 5 WAS ROCKED BY THE EXPLOSION... THE EXPLOSION THAT STARTED IT ALL...
IT WAS ON THE GRAVEYARD SHIFT... THAT LONG MONOTONOUS HAUL FROM MIDNIGHT TO DAWN WHEN THE ONLY DISTURBANCE IS USUALLY THE SOFT WHIR OF THE AIR PURIFICATION SYSTEM THAT MAKES THIS UNDERGROUND COMPLEX LIVABLE... BUT NOT THIS NIGHT, NOT WITH A GENIUS IN RESEARCH ON THE VERGE OF A DISCOVERY...
DOCTOR CRANE! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? DOC?
ADKINS

gauze out. 'Where do you want the texture, Ross?'"

AS THE GIANT SHIP DREW CLOSE TO THE STRANGE FORM, CAPTAIN DURWARD AND EXPEDITION DIRECTOR ELLIOT BENT FORWARD, THEIR TENSE FACES BATHED IN THE SCANNING SCREEN'S GLOW ....
..OF COURSE THERE'S A GOOD POSSIBILITY IT'S DEAD, CAPTAIN. CAST INTO SPACE BY AN EXPLODING PLANET... A CORPSE DRIFTING FOREVER ...
EITHER WAY IT'S QUITE A FIND, EH, ELLIOT?
REMARKABLE! THE ODDS AGAINST AN ENCOUNTER LIKE THIS ARE ... INCALCUABLE! IN FACT, I FIND IT DISTURBING ...
THAT'S WHY THE MILITARY STILL CONTROLS THESE EXPLORATION TRIPS, ELLIOT... WHATEVER IT IS OUT THERE, MY BOYS CAN HANDLE IT!
LEAVING THE CONTROL ROOM, BOTH MEN CONTINUED TALKING, OVER THE STEADY POWER HUM OF THE INTER-DECK LIFT...
I RATHER HATE RISKING IT'S BEING BROUGHT INTO THE SHIP, BUT...
OUR MISSION'S TO EXPLORE AND EXAMINE... YOU CAN'T DO A COMPLETE JOB TILL THAT THING'S IN THE LABORATORY HOLD!
...UNTIL THEY REACHED THE BRIEFING ROOM WHERE A SELECTED GROUP OF MEN WAIT...
PROBABLY THE CREATURE'S DEAD, BUT PLAY IT CLOSE TO THE VEST... IF PRELIMINARY TESTS REGISTER POSITIVE, THROW AN ENERGY SHIELD AROUND IT AND GET BACK TO THE SHIP... WE'LL TAKE IT FROM THERE!
AGAINST THE DARK VELVET EMPTINESS OF INTER-GALACTIC SPACE, THE MEN WENT ABOUT THEIR TASK, SWARMING ABOUT THE STILL, FLOATING HULK...
NO SWEAT, SKIPPER! ALL TESTS NEGATIVE! IT'S BIG AND UGLY, BUT IT'S DEAD! STAND BY AT NUMBER 3 HATCH! WE'RE BRINGING IT ABOARD!

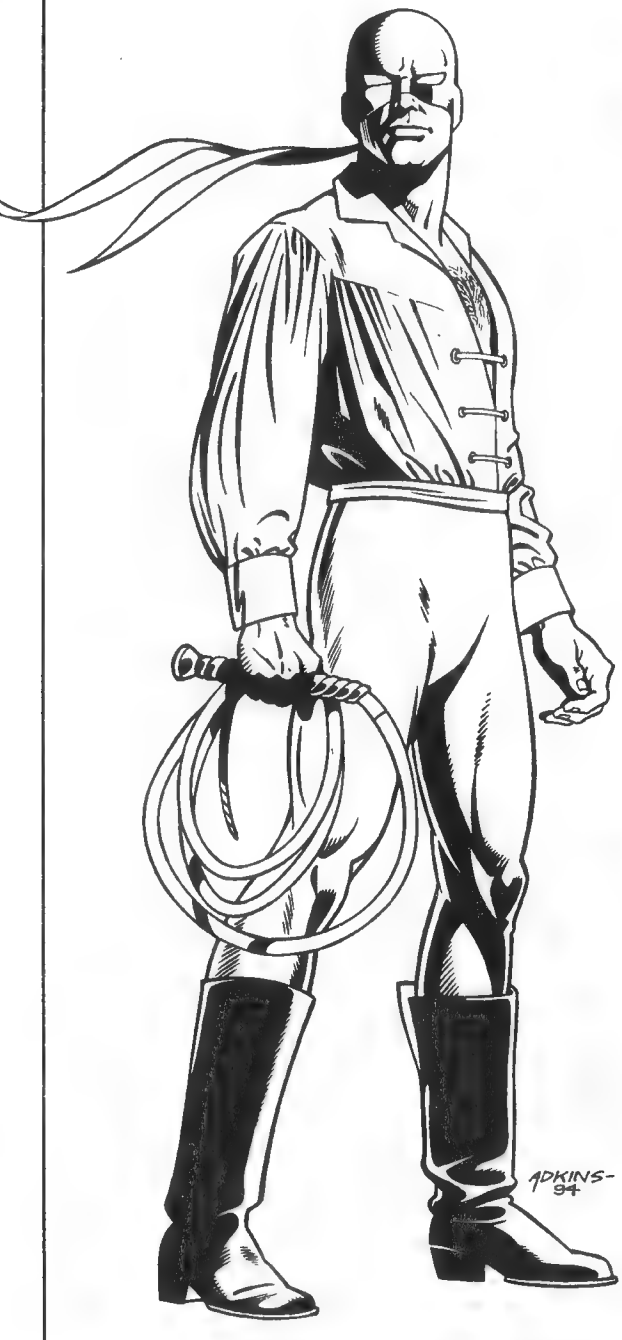
From July, 1967, "It!" by Archie G. and Dan A. (from EERIE #10).

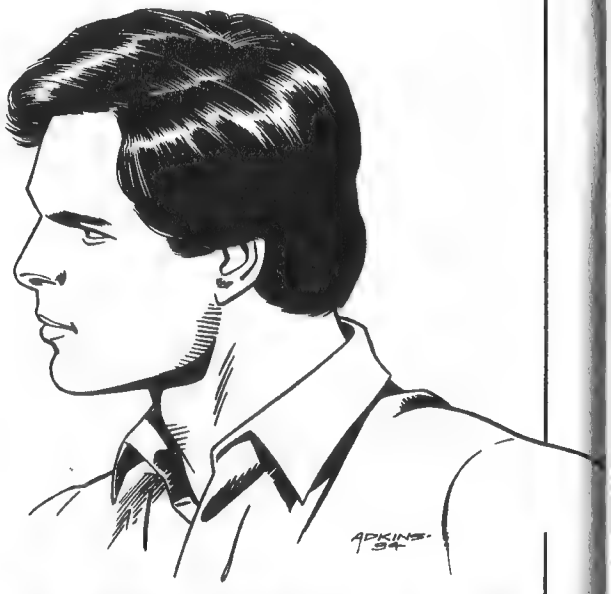
"It's the same old story, rush rush rush, fix up fix up fix up."

the texture, Ross?" *(Laughter.)* That's rough. I stayed up once 72 hours doing something and took it up to **John Verpoorten** and the son of a bitch sat it on top of a filing cabinet for a week. He's got me killing myself.

LOU: *How did you manage to stay awake for 72 hours?*
DAN: Oh, it's *bad,* I tell you. You hear your heart beating, your face feels dry, your scalp itches, but you just do it, you know. It's only three days.

LOU: *I wouldn't want to try it, myself.*
DAN: I couldn't do it now. **Steranko's** done even more, I think. I know he once didn't leave the house for about 23 days.
LOU: *And Wally never slept.*
DAN: Oh, Wally was Superman. He





Two of Dan's most recent illustrations (full pencils and inks). And a special teaming of Dan with his friend and co-worker, the late, great Wally Wood.

"I'd like to get into a position, like Russell or Gulacy or Smith."

...SEEKS... AND FINDS.
FAFNIR!
HELLO... LITTLE MAN...
HOW GOES IT, VANIRMAN? THAT FLAMING ARROW WHICH FELLED YOU--
--DIDN'T QUITE HAVE MY NAME SCRAWLED ON IT, IT SEEMS.
THOUGH IT MIGHT AS WELL HAVE.
AH, CONAN, CONAN... IT'S A FOOL THING I'VE DONE...
TRAVELING HALF-WAY 'CROSS THE WORLD...TO DIE AT THE HAND OF A MAN I'LL NEVER SEE...
...A MAN WHO THREW BLAZING DEATH FROM AFAR!
ENOUGH TALK OF DYING. YOU SEEM WELL ENOUGH TO ME.
I'LL CART YOU TO WHERE YOU'LL BE AMONG THE LIVING, MAN...
LIVING, PERHAPS... BUT NO LONGER QUITE A MAN.
I FELL, CONAN... MUCH FOUL WATER GOT INTO MY WOUND...
...IT MIXED WITH THE BURN IN MY LEFT ARM...
...AND THEY HAD TO CUT IT OFF.
NOW, GO AWAY.. AND PLAY WITH YOUR BATTLE TOYS, LITTLE MAN.
OLD FAFNIR... NEEDS HIS... REST...

"The Black Hound of Vengeance!" from CONAN #20 (November, 1972), by Roy Thomas and Barry Windsor-Smith. Dan's proudest inking job.

smoked a couple of packs a day. I smoked up until I had my last six teeth pulled and the guy said I shouldn't smoke for a couple of days, and I just kept *not* smoking.

LOU: *So, you will be doing something in the future, right?*

DAN: Well, what I want to do — I didn't do any drawing hardly at all in '92, having that depression and everything, and that was a real fun thing in one way, although it was really miserable.

LOU: *I'm sure it was.*

DAN: On an intellectual level it was like a detective mystery, having the doctors figure out what's wrong with you. I couldn't believe it could be a thing like depression; I had no idea depression could be like an illness. So, it gives you a lot of time to think and decide what to do, and you don't want to spend the rest of your life just inking people to fix up, you know. So, like the last thing they gave me here at Marvel, I got the job and it was in blue pencil instead of completed pencils. It had no borders and no lettering. In other words, it's the same old story, rush rush rush, fix up fix up fix up.

I'd like to get into a position, like **Russell** or **Gulacy** or **Smith,** where you pick and choose what you're going to do. Craig does these things that he likes to do, these operas and stuff, then he occasionally inks to make money. Now that I know how to draw after all these years — *(Laughter.)* I don't have to use swipes as much, and I've accumulated thousands of references that I can't get caught at, so I'd rather go back to pencilling, do mini-series and that type of thing. And plot them myself, take them to people. I may do a SUB-MARINER but if Marvel doesn't like it I'll change it to something else. I want to spend the rest of my time coming *up* to my abilities instead of working *down* to my limitations, taking that path of least resistance. I don't want to do that any more.

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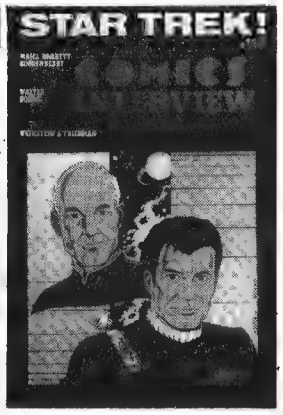

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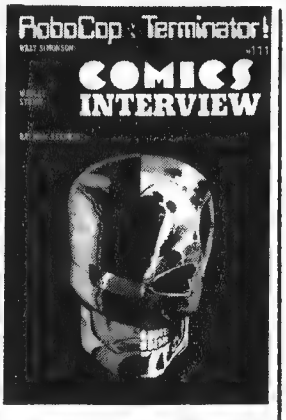

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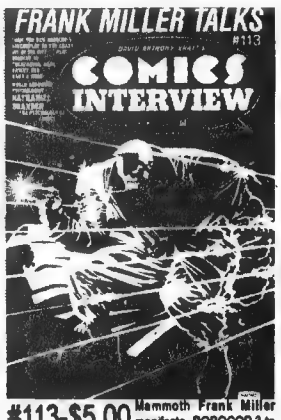

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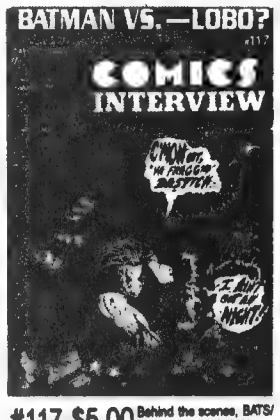

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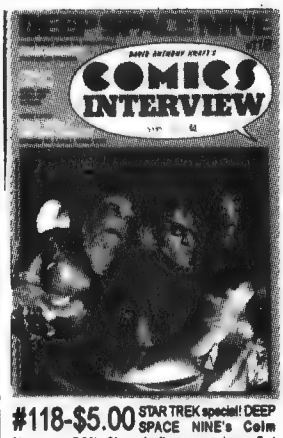

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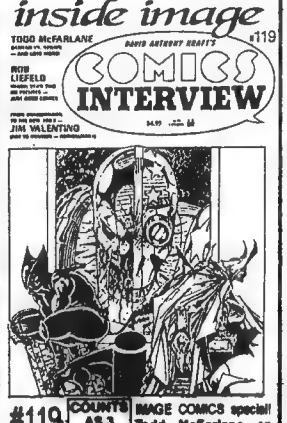
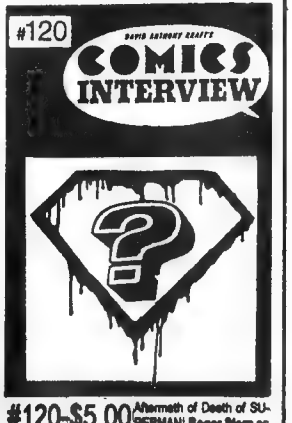


#119 COUNTS AS 3 IMAGE COMICS special! Todd McFarlane on BATMAN VS. SPAWN, more — Rob Liefeld on YOUNGBLOOD, Image/Valiant Xover — Valentino on SHADOWHAWK, 1963, more! Hot cover!



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LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

GOOD POINTS ABOUT BAD BUSINESS (BRIAN MORRIS, NOT BRIAN MURRAY)

Dear DAK:

INTERVIEW #134 is your best issue in a long time, maybe your best issue ever. Issue #100's feature listing the most powerful people in comics was damned good (you should do it on a regular basis), and I remember a couple of newsworthy issues in the past, most notably the one on censorship — but devoting an entire issue to "comics in crisis" was timely and, as no one else seems to have had the balls to do it, one of those dirty jobs that just have to be done.

And **Darrel Boatz** acquitted himself (and the unfairly assailed independents, as well) eloquently. I don't know whose decision it was to include the particular participants, but the mix was perfect. **Todd McFarlane,** who is often unfocussed and incendiary in his interviews (maybe he just likes to tweak the noses of pompous and self-important interviewers like **Gary Groth** and **Peter David**) came off as passionate but the voice of reason. I must say that surprised me. Todd made some good points about some very bad business policies of Capital Distribution.

As did the other participants, each of whom contributed insights from equally valid if entirely different perspectives. But I noticed a mistake on your contents page: retailer **Brian Morris** is listed as **Brian Murray** — or is it the other way around, and his name is wrong in the interview? Either way, it's a slip from your usual high standards of proofing.

Given the buzz this issue is sure to generate in (and outside) the comics industry, and the unerringly accurate way in which you nailed the central issues, maybe COMICS INTERVIEW should shift focus somewhat in order to devote more coverage to *real* comics news stories such as this one. Since there are so few others tackling these all-important topics, you could perform an important service to the field. And you could sure show COMICS JOURNAL a thing or two!

Jim Bridges
3180 Mathieson Drive #21
Atlanta, GA 30305

Last issue was even more of an accomplishment than you realize, Jim — there was scarcely a pause in the production process from the day Darrel arranged the multi-link conference with the telephone company to the day issue #134 rolled off the presses. From start to finish, this was the most up-to-the-minute and timely issue of COMICS INTERVIEW ever, more like a newspaper than a magazine.

We were exhausted but amazed that it all came together so well. Until, that is, you pointed out the unfortunate error (we're especially careful in proofing people's names, as we obviously concentrate on the people in comics more than the characters . . . albeit sometimes the people we talk with are *characters).*

Anyway, I wrote the contents and credits by hand and faxed them straight out for typesetting. My hand-lettering of Brian Morris must have looked like Brian Murray to a harried and hurrying Don Markstein, trying desperately to make out my chicken-scratching and meet an impossible deadline. When the type came back here for final proofing, as the word "Murray" wasn't misspelled, it attracted no attention and slipped right on through our own harried and hurrying-round-the-clock final proofing and production.

It's really all my fault, since in the end I certainly know the name Brian Morris — who was an early retailer interview way back in issue #15. My apologies to Brian, and my thanks to you for bringing it to my attention, Jim.

— DAK

ANOTHER SATISFIED READER

COMICS INTERVIEW crew,

You've been doing some good issues lately. You were the first to really cover the forthcoming JUDGE DREDD movie starring **Sly Stallone** in #128, and the big **Miller & McFarlane** issue after it was great. So was #130 with STAR WARS. But #131, featuring the behind-the-scenes stuff with **John Kricfalusi,** was a true gem and the kind of coverage it's almost impossible to find. His special cover painted for that issue was wild.

But #132 topped it! There hasn't been much coverage of the LOIS & CLARK TV series anywhere, and yours was the best I've seen. A couple insiders discussing actual details of the show's first season, with all kinds of storyboards used as illustrations. I don't know how you guys do it, but I've come to expect this kind of extra touch from COMICS INTERVIEW. Also, I really wasn't paying that much attention to the credits on the show, but after reading the **Paul Power/ Bryce Zabel** interview, I rented a videotape of a movie written by **Mr. Zabel,** about UFOs, sort of an ET type of film (can't remember the title right now) — but it was good. I enjoyed it and I'll be watching to see what he does with Fox's MANTIS series this fall.

The big BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD issue (#133), which also had **Jeff Smith** of BONE and lots of other stuff, was entertaining. I like the bigger issues and don't mind paying an extra buck. It's worth it to me to get the extra material and I think you should do more of these. Better yet, just raise the price to $4.95 and make every issue bigger!

I can't wait to see your upcoming issue on THE MASK movie! Keep this great magazine coming.

Larry Leroux
316 E. 77th St. Apt. D
New York, NY

INTERVIEW welcomes your thoughts and comments in the Last Word. Send your correspondence to: DAK, COMICS INTERVIEW, 234 Fifth Ave., Suite 301, New York, NY 10001, or fax your letter to (706) 782-6625. Please include your name and address.

INTERVIEW reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity.

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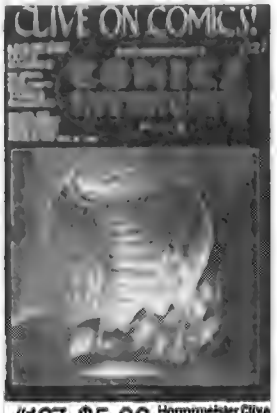
#122-$5.00 A rap with TV's Bill Wray on TV's REN & STIMPY — Mike Royer, part 2 — original CAPTAIN MARVEL artist Marc Swayze — Marvel's Dan Slott on MIGHTY MOUSE, more!

#123-$5.00 Spotlight on X-MEN 2099 with John Francis Moore — actress Margot Kidder on SUPERMAN films — spotlight on TV's MODEL BY DAY, plus comic creator Kevin Taylor.

#124-$5.00 Spotlight on Valiant/Image crossover, DEATHMATE — anonymous '40s DC scripter Alvin Schwartz tells tales — TV's Green Hornet, Van Williams, more! Chen/Gallagher cover.

#125-$5.00 DC's Denny O'Neill on BATMAN — actor John DeLancie of TREK: TNG on comics — DARK SHADOWS artist Ken Reid — actor Lyle Talbot on SUPES, BATS movie serials, more!

#126 COUNTS AS 3 STAR TREK Special! Majel Barrett Roddenberry on what's coming up — actors George Takei, Michael Dorn — FX designers Tony Meininger, Dennis Hoenter, more!



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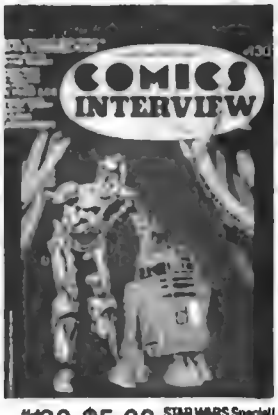
#129 COUNTS AS FIVE Big BATS/SPAWN issue! Todd McFarlane talks — and talks — Frank Miller on SIN CITY, ROBOCOP, BATMAN — Ferd Johnson pt. 2 — Hot McFarlane/Beauf'hanskit cover!



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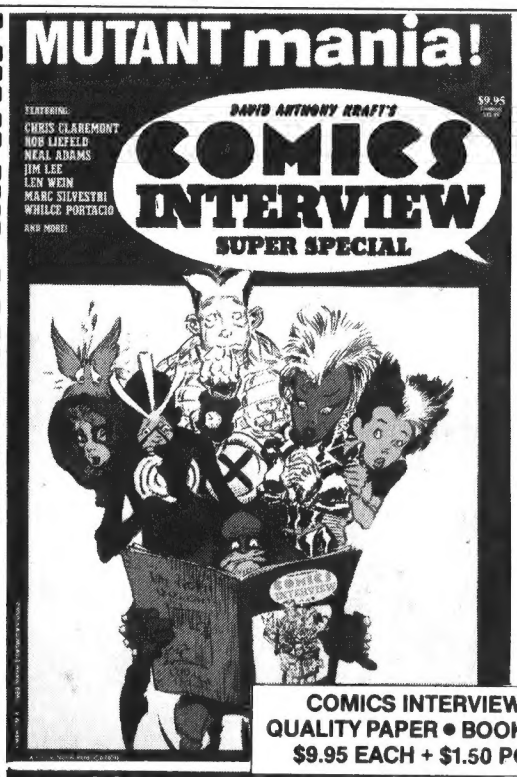

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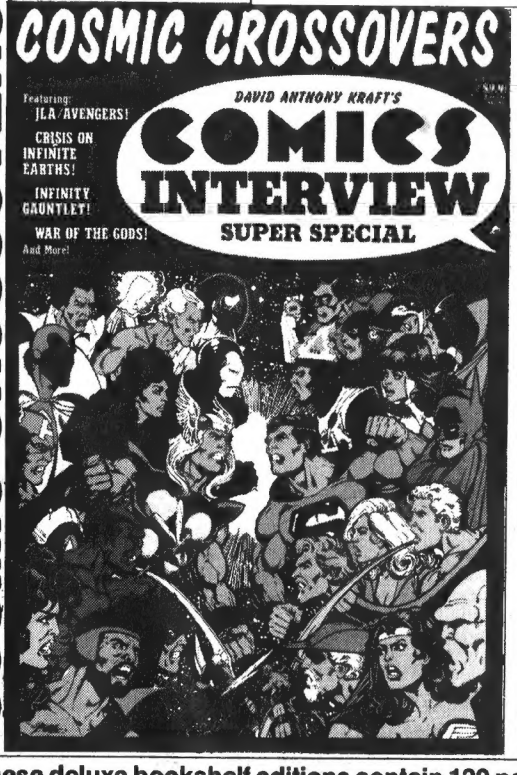

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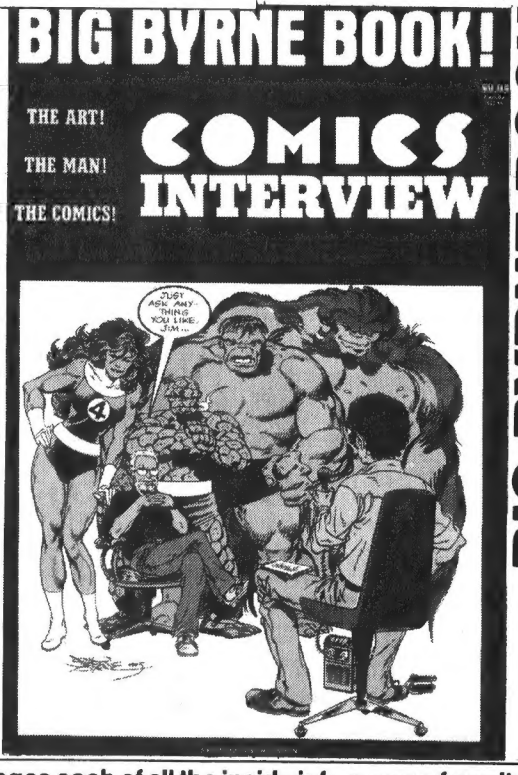

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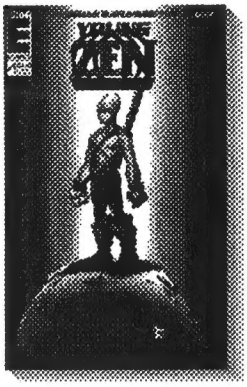

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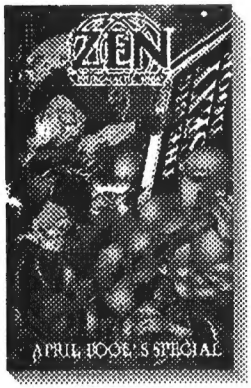

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